

Postulating the Personal in Abstract Art through Poetry

The Development and Implementation of an Abstract Ekphrasis

Dominic Symes

B.A (Hons.)

Presented as requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Discipline of English, School of Humanities

University of Adelaide, Australia

April 2019

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	5
DECLARATION	7
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
CHAPTER ONE	30
POETRY: ‘Walking-Along-With’	30
<i>Self Portrait after Belem Lett</i>	32
<i>“Paradise” after Tristan Kerr & Thomas McCammon</i>	34
<i>Self Portrait, the Executioner after Ben Quilty</i>	46
<i>And The Bridegroom after Lucien Freud</i>	48
<i>A Shape of Thought after Mikala Dwyer</i>	50
<i>Above Us the Great Grave Sky after Arthur Streeton</i>	52
<i>Ode to TOM ROBERTS</i>	59
<i>Apollo and the Artist after Cy Twombly</i>	63
ESSAY: Ekphrasis as Event: <i>Poets Paint Words</i> and the Performance of Ekphrasis in Australia.....	67
CHAPTER TWO	91
POETRY: ‘Meandering’	91
<i>The Madness of the Day (Experimental Art Foundation)</i>	92
<i>Friction (Art Gallery of South Australia)</i>	94

<i>Waiting on the landing (Art Gallery of South Australia)</i>	96
<i>From Crown Street to Whitely Studio</i>	99
<i>Wednesday Nights at Art Gallery NSW</i>	105
<i>Salon De Refusés (S H Ervin Gallery, Sydney)</i>	108
<i>MAXXI (Contemporary Art Museum, Rome)</i>	120
ESSAY: A Meandering Line: The Effect of Indeterminacy in a Gallery Ekphrasis	122
CHAPTER THREE	141
POETRY: ‘Footsteps’ Poems to the Sea after Cy Twombly	141
<i>White Voices from the Sea</i>	142
HERE	143
<i>Roman Wall / to Twombly Canvas</i>	144
<i>Writing into Light (A Secret Poem)</i>	148
<i>Bells — Monte 7/10/17</i>	150
<i>A Roman Holiday</i>	151
LANDSCAPE	152
<i>La Vague</i>	153
<i>Passing Duino</i>	154
<i>Sapphic</i>	155
<i>This Too Has Colour (Scatole Personali)</i>	156
CERTAINTY	165
<i>Leaves</i>	166

ALIVE.....	168
<i>Hymn to Possibility</i>	169
<i>Song of the Sea / to Shelley</i>	171
<i>For Them to Come</i>	173
<i>Sun Stone</i>	174
<i>A Hymn to Possibilities</i>	180
DAWN	181
<i>Opera Bar Bazzanti</i>	182
<i>24 Poems / to the Sea</i>	186
ESSAY: Twombly, <i>Translatio</i> and Contemporary Indirect-Ekphrasis	187
CONCLUSION	205
APPENDIX ONE	212
WORKS CITED	214
WORKS CONSULTED	225

ABSTRACT

Considering ekphrasis as poetry written in response to an existing work of art, my thesis, “Postulating the Personal in Abstract Art Through Poetry”, engages intimately with referent works such that my analysis and composition of poetry articulate an ‘abstract ekphrasis’. Both visual art and poetry are considered as equivalent artefacts through a Practice as Research paradigm that emphasises the importance of process. As the development and implementation of this ‘abstract ekphrasis’, my thesis demonstrates ekphrasis that is dynamic and contemporary: subsuming influence and creating itself as its own object whilst remaining discernibly linked to a work of art.

My thesis is divided into three chapters to present three variations of contemporary ekphrasis. Each chapter includes an essay and a series of poems. Chapter One includes the essay “Ekphrasis as Event” and the accompanying creative work “Walking-along-*with*”. Chapter Two includes the essay “A Meandering Line” and the accompanying creative work “Meandering”. Chapter Three includes the essay “Twombly, *Translatio* and Contemporary Indirect-Ekphrasis” and the accompanying creative work “Footsteps: Poems to the Sea after Cy Twombly”. This structure reflects how, through a performative research approach, the creative and the critical-exegetical works developed concurrently and are mutually dependent. Both are essential expressions of the new knowledge that has been formed over the duration of my creative research project.

The three essays each combine an analysis of existing literature with exegesis to contextualise the creative work that accompanies the critical-exegetical writing in that

chapter. The creative works in each chapter act as the substantiation and justification for the theory that is developed in the essay.

Theoretically, the first chapter engages with a direct form of ekphrastic writing, where the poem and the work of art are simultaneously read and viewed by the audience. For this reason, artworks that are pivotal to the writing contained in Chapter One are reproduced within this chapter. Because Chapter Two and Chapter Three explore less direct forms of ekphrastic writing (being in the gallery space or in the space of an artist's influences) there are no referent images for the creative work. In this indirect mode, the poems create themselves as their own objects.

The poems in each chapter are arranged sequentially to trace local origins that extend outwards. The first two chapters contain poetry that is site-specific to local galleries in Adelaide before similar proximity-based methods are applied to works of art contained in interstate and overseas galleries. The third chapter follows a journey from Rome to Gaeta in the footsteps of American gestural-abstract painter Cy Twombly.

Each poem is the expression of an abstract ekphrasis that reinterprets the status of reference within ekphrasis. The abstract ekphrastic poetry presented in my thesis incorporates intertextuality and intimacy to replace the traditional representational-descriptive practices of ekphrastic writing. Poetry emerges that reflects affect and scholarship, as the outcome of a creative process that demonstrates attention to and engagement with works of art in a physical space.

DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I acknowledge that copyright of published works contained within this thesis resides with the copyright holder(s) of those works.

I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Mr. Dominic Symes
B.A. (Hons)
8 November 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An earlier version of the essay “Ekphrasis as Event” appeared in *Cordite 56: Ekphrastic*. An earlier version of the essay “A Meandering Line” appeared in *Axon: Creative Explorations Issue 8.1*. My thanks to the reviewers and editors.

Poems contained within this thesis appeared in *Australian Book Review’s “States of Poetry” Series Two*, *Australian Poetry Journal’s Anthology 2018*, *Mantra Review (US)*, and *SWAMP Postgraduate Creative Writing Magazine Issue 22*. Poems in this thesis have also appeared in my own chapbooks *NOW NOW* (Garron Press, 2018) and *Minor Seconds* (Little Windows, 2018). My thanks to the editors and publishers.

The commissioned ekphrastic poems of “Paradise” were exhibited at the Centre for Creative Photography alongside photographic work from Thomas McCammon and Tristan Kerr in February 2017. My thanks to the artists.

As the recipient of an Australian Postgraduate Award Scholarship I have received a stipend for the duration of my candidature. I would like to acknowledge the Australian Government’s generous support in granting me this opportunity to pursue my research full time.

My sincere thanks to Ms. Jill Jones, my principal supervisor, for delivering a fantastic lecture on ekphrasis to an undergraduate poetry class in 2011 and guiding me through the next eight years of questions that resulted.

My thanks to Prof. Brian Castro, my co-supervisor, for his insight and his patience in taking the time to assist me through my early attempts at scholarly writing.

My thanks to Dr. Ken Bolton for his honesty as an early reader of these poems. My thanks also to Alison Flett and Banjo James for their invaluable feedback on this project as it took shape and their discernment as it neared completion.

I am very grateful for the support of my family over these past three years. My thanks to Mum, Dad, Brigid and Elsa.

Finally, to Dorie, thanks for making everything impossible seem possible. All my love.

Φέρτε νερό, φέρετε κρασί, αγόρι, και φέρετε λουλούδια γιρλάντες για μας,
έτσι ώστε να μπορώ να κουτί με τον Έρωτα

Bring water, bring wine, boy, and bring wreaths of flowers,
I mean to box with love

Anacreon Fr. 396

INTRODUCTION

In introducing my thesis, I will identify key texts that have formed the foundations of my abstract ekphrasis; in particular how these texts have shaped my understanding of the terms ekphrasis and abstraction. I will provide some reflection on how the structure of my thesis, split between three hybrid chapters, developed as a method for conducting and presenting creative research following my Honours thesis. I will also foreground the major themes and influences present within my creative work including a discussion of the lyrical poetic mode, the different forms of intertextual reference, and the significance of intimacy and proximity. Finally, I will set the theoretical parameters for my study—stressing the importance of maintaining links with existing works of art through means other than description. As a matter of creative writing praxis, my contention is that it is necessary for the abstract ekphrastic poet to remain creatively and interpretively attentive in the composition of their poem to establish these links.

The relationship between ekphrasis and representation, in both the verbal and visual arts, traces as far back as Aristotle's *Poetics*. For Aristotle, the process of *mimesis* purposes words in service to an “imitation” of nature (93). James Heffernan in “Ekphrasis and Representation” enmeshes the similarity between the act of the poet and the act of the artist in this mimetic tradition by defining ekphrasis as: “the verbal representation [created by the poet] of graphic representation [created by an artist]” (299). This doubly representational reading harkens back to the oft-wielded maxim from Horace's “Ars Poetica”, “ut pictura poesis”; meaning “as in painting, so in poetry” (“Epistles”, Book II). Parsing the function of the ekphrastic poet in this representational tradition, Ernst Gombrich's argument in *Art as Illusion*—that *mimesis*, being the principle by which the artist aspires through graphic

representation “toward the perfection of the illusion” (278)—implies a subordinate role for the ekphrastic poet. If the *mimetic* artist creates an illusory “window” to an image, then it follows from Horace’s axiom that the ekphrastic poet is to look through the same window and describe what they see.

Gombrich’s window metaphor is central to the mimetic tradition of ekphrastic poetry where representation manifests as the default mode in the visual arts and description as the default in the verbal arts. The descriptive impulse in ekphrasis is expressed either in the form of actual-ekphrasis or notional-ekphrasis. An actual-ekphrasis like W. H. Auden’s “Musée Des Beaux Artes” is written in response to an actual work of art by a known artist. For Auden this is Brueghel the Elder’s *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (c.1590-95). Conversely, a notional-ekphrasis invents an artwork, like the urn in John Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn”. Keats’ meditation on the beautiful and the sublime is essentially linked to the “unravish’d bride of quietness” that he creates through his description of the urn (qtd. in Wu 1284). Yet, because Heffernan’s representation-of-a-representation formula relies upon two representational actors, Keats must also invent an artist to initiate this original act of representation to which he responds: this is the potter, described as the “foster-child of silence and slow time” (qtd. in Wu 1286). Aristotle’s concept of *mimesis* and Horace’s axiom of equivalence are a key to examine how links are established by poets between the work of art and the poem in this tradition, drawing attention to both the representational object and the creator of the representational object.

In Francesco Parmigianino’s *Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (c.1524), the painter has approached the task of completing a self-portrait in this mimetic-representational manner. However, John Ashbery’s ekphrastic poem of the same title, first published in 1975, breaks

from the mimetic-descriptive response tradition. Kirk Varnedoe writes in response to Gombrich's theory of illusion, that whilst the mimetic painter paints what they see, the abstract expressionist painter aspires to have "no reference" in reality (31): rather, they see what they paint. Ashbery notes a similar switch in his recollection of Parmigianino's work, as:

... he set himself
With great art to copy all that he saw in the glass,"
Chiefly his reflection, of which the portrait
Is the reflection, of which the portrait
Is the reflection once removed. ("Self Portrait" 68)

In contradistinction to Gombrich's conception of the illusory window is first generation abstract expressionist painter William Baziotes' model of the mirror-canvas. In an interview regarding his process the painter says of his canvases, "They are mirrors. They tell me what I am like at the moment" (qtd. in Moramarco 443). Fred Moramarco contends that developing the small "convex mirror, such as is used by barbers..." (Ashbery "Self Portrait" 68) as the central conceit in his response to this 16th Century painting allowed Ashbery to link Parmigianino's use of the canvas as a mirror to the abstract expressionist painters who were his contemporaries.

Attempting to find an equivalent to these experimental approaches to painting in his writing, Fred Moramarco notes how Ashbery sought "the freedom ... for self-expression of the deepest sort" in his earlier works like *The Tennis Court Oath* (1962) and *The Double Dream of Spring* (1970) (450). Ashbery wrote on the jacket cover of *The Tennis Court Oath*, "I

attempt to use words abstractly, as an abstract painter would use paint...My aim is to give the meaning free play and the fullest possible range” (n.p). In long poems that preceded “Self Portrait”, such as “The Skaters” of 1966, he exploits the elongated form to explore what Michael Davidson calls a “painterly approach” by incorporating “multiple frames” (76). Whilst not ekphrastic in the sense that it was in response to a specific artwork, Ashbery’s earlier work established a projective and multi-layered subject position, owing a debt to the pioneering ekphrastic works of American Modernists and Imagists like Wallace Stevens. Stevens’s *The Man With the Blue Guitar*, like Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons*, exemplifies the possibility for shifts in perspective within a poem by adopting the approach of cubist painters like Picasso. Described as “the diffracting diamond” by Alan Williamson (116), Ashbery’s speaking subject is able to split itself and proliferate into a unique poly-vocal register that achieves this sense of “free play”. The mature form of this style of writing is present in “Self Portrait”. The “free play” remains linked to the work of art and the poem, due to its length, permits the complexity of Ashbery’s speaker to develop as time passes. The combination of Parmigianino’s impulse to expand the parameters of self-representation through the distorted mirror, to use art as a means of self-interrogation, and to paint from such a personally intimate yet obscure perspective makes this painting well-suited to Ashbery’s own creative aspirations.

What makes Ashbery’s poem a key text in introducing the work undertaken in my thesis is the potential for a poem to break the mimetic (that is to say ‘representational-descriptive’) bind present in ekphrasis. Ashbery’s departure from tradition sets a precedent for other poets to pursue non-descriptive approaches to ekphrastic writing. Equally, this non-descriptive writing method enables the poet to engage with artworks that are not mimetic: to postulate

the personal in the abstract. Ashbery's poem informs my own critical and creative work that I wish to develop as 'abstract ekphrasis'.

To define this mode of non-descriptive ekphrastic writing as abstract, I am heavily indebted to Kirk Varnedoe's treatise on the term in *Pictures of Nothing: Abstract Art since Pollock*. Rather than relying on terms that are negating (such 'non-descriptive' and 'non-representational') or epoch dependent, Varnedoe argues that abstraction is a productive term that encompasses the shift in aesthetic principles in the post-WWII era of American cultural expansion ("Pictures" 3). Although Varnedoe's thesis is applied primarily to intertextual and self-referential works of visual art, I am eager to stress an equivalence between the two media as a response to these same aesthetic and cultural phenomena during this period.¹ In this mode of abstraction, artists express a willingness to shed the baggage of idealism, creating around themselves a world of the ironic and referential, as their art knowingly enters into dialogue with the work of other artists ("Pictures" 237). Whilst this is an inherent feature of any ekphrasis, traditional or otherwise (as ekphrastic poems are always "after" the artwork), I believe the way that abstract artists embrace reference establishes a precedent for the task of the abstract ekphrastic poet.

Furthermore, in contrast to the illusory properties of representational art, abstract artworks (by virtue of being non-representational) encourage multiple readings by placing an emphasis on the personal (both of the encounter with the artwork and of the artwork's creation), exploring "subjective experience and open-ended interpretation" ("Pictures" 226; 270). This

¹ Similarly, though it may seem there is a preponderance of painters as the basis for much of this theory of the abstract, I follow Varnedoe in his more expansive conception of abstract artists that incorporates other media—such that, where possible I have used the term 'artist' when talking about the creator of a work of art to which some piece of ekphrastic poetry is written in response, except where the term 'painter' is required to denote some specific function within that particular medium.

aesthetic practice embraces the shift from painting what one sees, to seeing what one paints; with the artists exploring “culture as separate from nature” to interrogate form beyond the naturalistic (“Pictures” 272). To marry opacity and difficulty of perception with intimacy and reference is a unique feature of abstract art, making it the best analogue for contemporary lyrical poetry that aspires to the same aesthetic ends. Varnedoe asserts that abstract art “wilfully and knowingly flirts with absurdity and emptiness, dancing on a knife edge of nonsense and beckoning us to come along” (“Pictures” 42). The inherent drive in this conception of the abstract is to test the bounds of pre-existing definitions and in this spirit of the avant-garde, it establishes itself as a form of innovative, creative research.

Genevieve Kaplan notes in “Ekphrasis for Writers: John Ashbery’s ‘Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror’”, that “ekphrastic writing [after Ashbery’s poem] may easily include elements of interpretation, meditation, interrogation, comparison, criticism, and praise as well as the more traditional description and narrative” (2). As the poet replaces the descriptive drive with a creative, connotative and interrogative impulse, she contends that instead of assessing Ashbery’s poem against the standards of traditionally conceptualised ekphrasis, critics should begin “looking at ekphrasis in terms of Ashbery’s poem” (4). My thesis follows Kaplan’s line of argument by using experimental creative work as the source of new poetic knowledge.

I want to demonstrate how a contemporary ekphrasis in Varnedoe’s spirit of abstraction can articulate, interrogate and build upon the foundations laid by Ashbery’s poem. By pushing the practice of ekphrastic poetics to a limit, I hope to isolate the essential requirements for these experimental modes of ekphrasis to remain ekphrastic. Although Ashbery’s poem is written in response to a representational work of art, I believe that by shedding the mimetic baggage of representation and description, as he does in this poem, a more dynamic form of

ekphrasis results, and that this can be utilised to respond to non-representational works of art. Taking this more dynamic approach as a starting point, whether I am writing in response to representational or non-representational works of art, I begin with an original abstracting gesture, treating each work as an opportunity for a self-portrait so as to engage intimately with the work of art.

My thesis is divided into three chapters with each chapter presenting a variation of abstract ekphrastic writing. Chapters consist of a critical-exegetical section that examines literature in the field to contextualise my own, as well as a creative section that includes poems composed within a corresponding framework. True to the way my research expanded over three years, each chapter in my thesis denotes the development of a new approach to contemporary ekphrastic practice where the creative and critical work were simultaneous and co-emergent. This structure reflects my co-emergent, Practice as Research methodology (Haseman 147).²

As Practice Based Research treats the creative artefact as the contribution to knowledge, commonly the exegesis is completed once the artefact is completed. A creative writing thesis following this method would present the exegesis as a supplement to the creative work.

Alternatively, a Practice-Led Research thesis seeking to articulate creative research for the sake of practitioners would proceed by developing and outlining the framework for creative practice before including any creative work. Borrowing from both of these qualitative research methodologies my hybridised Practice as Research methodology allows the research to be expressed jointly through the creative artefact and the more traditional essay form.

² Co-emergent practice is examined in greater detail in Chapter One. Barbara Bolt, the co-editor of *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* where Haseman's article appears, is the focus of Chapter One's Australian approach to Ekphrasis.

This choice is the result of a year spent reflecting on my previous research undertaken as part of my Honours thesis, *Nine Ways of Looking at a Painting*. In this earlier research I approached the topic of ekphrasis through a Practice-Led Research paradigm. This meant that after taking a semester to outline the theory behind my work, the poems were rushed to be completed in the final weeks before the deadline. This restricted opportunities for the creative work to be fed back into the theoretical foundations of my research through “feedback loops” (Haseman 153). Regardless of an individual poem’s effectiveness, each needed to be included because of the methodology’s constraints. In planning this current project, I wanted to allow space for the poems that worked to guide my creative research, influencing other poems as well as the theory expounded in the corresponding essays.

The poems from my previous research that still resonated with me were intimate, paying close attention to the painting itself and the person who created it. From this consideration, I surmised that through a style of personal and performative poetry, an abstract ekphrasis would enable me to access the personal and performative aspects in works of art that appeared impersonal because of their opaque and non-representational properties. Similarly, this personal engagement extended from a desire to further develop my own emerging style of writing. Rather than simply presenting poems that were the evidence of exercises (the results from my experiments) these poems are a contribution to knowledge in their own right alongside the research disseminated more traditionally through the essays.

During the course of this research project I have read widely and written many poems, articles, lists and scraps of text as a way of exploring experimental versions of ekphrastic poetry as a meaningful way to engage with art. Each chapter grew out of the draft of a poem or a line of argument in an essay that seemed to fall outside of an approach I had been

working on previously. Proceeding this way caused me to look back on the work that I had already conducted and reassess the conditions for what fit within the scope of my research project. Making something that didn't fit, not only helped retroactively, in articulating what it was that I had been doing up until that point, but also productively, as I was able to develop this new knowledge into a form of research to be expressed. The structure and presentation of this thesis is reflective of the way that new knowledge is generated in a Practice as Research methodology.

In the process of consolidating the three years of work that I have conducted in this research project, it has become clear that there are thematic concerns pertinent to all three chapters that are worth mentioning in this introduction. I can see how these concerns have developed from the first moments of my interest in poetry, in ekphrasis and in abstract art. I came late to poetry, with music being my first love. My introduction to the arts was through early training in the theory of musical composition. As I developed as a musician, and matured as a person, I increasingly sought opportunities to graduate from using music as an expression of other people's ideas to an expression of my own. As I began writing poetry in my early twenties, I found the experience much like learning a second language; taking the skills of composition and expression that I had learned from music and translating them across to the verbal arts. Whatever I was able to comprehend as a musician, I was able to accomplish in poetry as long as I had could make the necessary link.

Initially I was attracted to the poetry of Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac because of their ability to eschew the conventions of strict metrical patterns. From a music background, this seems almost unprecedented to me at the time, given that all I played or wrote was conducted within the confines of a key signature or a time signature. Critical comparisons of Beat

Generation poetry to Jazz-like improvisation were not just convenient metaphors for me, but an invitation to approach poetry through what I knew about music and to compose through improvisation and expression without the sort of limitations that I was bound to in music. The initial experience of writing poetry was a rush of freedom and possibility, like finding out that I could play any note in any pattern and never be out of key. To this day I still consider poetic composition through my “first language” of music and structure my poetry in relation to what is and is not analogous to my understanding of music. This has led me to experience poetry as a metaphoric process. Ekphrasis made sense to me as it mimicked the process that I had undertaken to arrive at poetry in the first place: to take my understanding of one compositional mode and to use it to shed a new light on work created in a different one. As I noticed when I first began writing poetry, my music benefitted from the new approaches that I was able to bring back into my music, whilst my understanding of poetry benefitted from my prior knowledge of tone, form and structure. In ekphrasis, my understanding of poetry benefits from applying new ideas gleaned from visual artists, whilst my interpretation of visual art is founded on my previous experience with the compositional processes of music and poetry.

As my study of poetry broadened from the initial American and British Modernists, to the Beats, then onto the New York School poets, it was in the work of these poets that I found a style of poetry that seemed to act as that bridging medium between visual art and music.³

Much like this style of poetry, the works of art that I found myself drawn to seemed to evoke

³ Whilst Frank O’Hara’s relationship with the visual arts is well established—through his friendships and collaborative relationships with visual artists, his monographs published in his *Art Chronicles* (1975) as well as in his professional capacity as a curator at MoMA in New York—it is often overlooked that his first artistic training was in music. Mark Ford writes in his Introduction to *Selected Poems*, “Initially, he intended a career in music, as a pianist or reviewer or composer. He was enrolled at a time in the New England Conservatory...” (xii). Without wishing to overstate the importance of this connection, or to vaingloriously draw spurious parallels between the poet and myself, I believe this biographical detail does lend credence to the potential for his poetry to be read as a “bridging medium” between music and the visual arts.

a sense of intimacy and opacity; two concepts I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Three in relation to Cy Twombly. These artworks were expressive, they were gestural and contained evidence of a human being in a given moment. These works of visual art were created by artists of a similar era as the New York School of poets, responding to many of the same aesthetic ideas, such that they were consonant with my conceptualisation of poetry. To return to the idea of translating concepts learned in one compositional “language” to another, whilst there may not be a particular thread in the selection of artists and poets in this thesis, I feel that what guides my eye to a work is its relation to my first language: as an analogue to my own aesthetic understanding, does it conform with what I already know, or does it push me to re-evaluate the boundaries of what I know?

Whilst abstraction can be read as synonymous with opacity and exclusion, in this collection of poems abstraction is purposed towards engaging more personally with a work of art. Abstraction, as an ekphrastic poet writing in response to a representational work of art, means abstracting the speaker from the intention of the artist to find a way of engaging in an unexpected way with the work of art. Abstraction, in response to a work of non-representational art, functions as an invitation to use the techniques and approaches of the artist in an equivalent poem. Thus, through abstraction, the poetry in this thesis conveys an intimacy between poet and work of art that incorporates the intimacy of address present in lyrical poetry. Both of these approaches are extensions of the intimacy that begins as attention within the space of art. As I have mentioned, this began as a reaction to the work undertaken in my previous research, but theoretically this approach is linked to Ashbery’s poem and the essential property of abstract expressionist painting summarised in Baziotes’ mirror-canvas. Metonymy, of the work of art with the artist in a given time and place of composition, is a function outlined by Jerrold Levinson in his study of non-representational

works of art (373). This performance-based reading of the artistic process suggests that in abstract painting, the painter's gestures leave an aftereffect on the canvas, such that the artwork is considered as the residue of the painter's lived experience in contact with the canvas. As Harold Rosenberg writes in *The Tradition of the New*, "The new painting has broken down every distinction between art and life" (4).

Allowing art and life to exist simultaneously marks the creative exercise as intimate and the poet must be sensitive to this writing in response to the work of art. Accordingly, the poet's personal engagement is an embodied process and the poem must result from a lived experience with the work of art. It is only through attention to the artist's process that the poet is able to access this level of gestational, process-formed knowledge of the artwork beyond the surface of the work. In cases where my poetry is written indirectly, in the space of a gallery or in response to the sphere of a painter's influences, it is this same intimacy and attention that allows the poem to maintain its essential (what I will argue as the 'ekphrastic') link to the existing works of art. This intimacy enables the poem to be critical and experimental without disengaging from the ekphrastic ties that link the poem to the work of art.

Poetry of this intimate nature materialises in the lyric mode, defined by Allen Grossman as poetry where there is a 'you' who is addressed: "there is never another who speaks—only the speaking itself, the subject who says 'you'" (10). Initially the 'you' is the artist or the artists themselves (a W or 'double-you' in the case of "Paradise" (1: 34-44)) as Chapter One approaches works of art non-descriptively, but directly. The plurality of perspectives, an aspect of abstract ekphrasis foreshadowed by the work of Ashbery, reaches its fullest

expression in “Above Us the Great Grave Sky” (1: 52-57).⁴ This poem incorporates the whole gamut of addressees including a loved other, the painter, an internal voice of the speaker addressing themselves, the voice of the poet from whose work the title is taken, as well as the text on the gallery wall. In Chapter Two the addressee is both a loved one and a critical foil. The earlier poems in this chapter write for an intimate, but absent, other as the focus of the speaker’s distraction. In “Salon De Refusés”, the ‘you’ is a painter-friend who becomes the antagonist in the speaker’s critical tour of the gallery; addressed and re-addressed through distraction (2: 108-19). In Chapter Three, foreshadowed by the opening acrostic poem “White Voices from the Sea”, the four addressees are named as the speaker’s intimate partner (Dorie), the poets of the past whose work has informed the painter (of whom Rilke is the emblem), the artist whose work is the inspiration for the collection (Edwin, the given name of ‘Cy’ Twombly) and finally, the speaker of the sequence of poems (A Poet) (3: 142).

Writing in the personal, lyric mode has also required me to revisit the elemental relationship between the lyric poem and music. Whilst I have mentioned the role of music in my own poetry more generally, its presence in this collection is through the lyric tradition and stretches as far back as Orpheus, whose presence in Rilke’s “Sonnets to Orpheus” becomes intertextually woven into Cy Twombly’s canvases of the 1980s, and to Sappho, the first great lyric poet, who like Orpheus is symbolised by the lyre. “Sapphic”, a poem written in the Sapphic metre included in the third chapter, references homophones for the word “lyre” as a way to further enmesh this ancient link (3: 155). Whilst my thesis involves deconstructing poetry and works of art to view them as equivalent processes, I believe music can also be purposefully regarded by this apparatus. As an interpretive process, the manner in which

⁴ The in-text reference here is related to one of my poems that is contained in this thesis. In the brackets, the first number signals the chapter in which that poem is located (1, 2, or 3). This is separated by a colon from the page number that identifies the location of the poem for easy cross-referencing.

music can be experienced non-linguistically, at the limits of our intellectual comprehension, is akin to how as viewers we engage with non-representational art: the listener is asked to experience the music, rather than to define it or describe it. By writing poems which aim to go beyond description, the same form of pleasure which comes from experiencing a piece of jazz or classical music is transposed onto poems that invoke the un-translatable quality of Twombly's works, like "La Vague" and "Passing Duino" (3: 153 & 154). As a performative mode of real-time composition music is, in this jazz-like form of improvisation through the interpolation of various themes, present in the arrangement of text across the page, rather than in the aural experience of the poems. Whilst the visual arrangement of the poems is symbolic of this relationship to music, music has a diegetic role in "From Crown Street to Whitely Studio" (2: 99-104), and as the "vague sound of a mambo" that is "sauntering drunkenly through" "Scatole Personali" (3: 161). These references reinforce this connection and enact the transposition of a compositional technique derived from an analogous, non-linguistic source. From the foundational relationship present in the lyric tradition, the role of music in these poems is an acknowledgement of the possibilities for indirect engagement across media through allusion and stylistic translation rather than description.

This thesis supposes a fundamental intertextual relationship between all works of art, where "the poet reads the painting as a text" (Davidson 72). For the sequence of poems in Chapter Three, "Footsteps: Poems to the Sea", the entire library of Twombly's Gaeta residence becomes the source material for composition. Similarly, the intertextual references to Adam Lindsay Gordon's poem "Doubtful Dreams" in "Above us the Great Grave Sky" and the many associative cultural references in "Salon Des Refusés", demonstrate how equivalence between different media allow all art to be considered as a complex matrix of text to be read and interpreted. Creating poetry in response to works of art not only relies on reading the

intertextual references of the artist's composition, but also writing to include these direct sources alongside other less direct sources that enter the poet's consciousness in the moment of composition. Treating both sources of inspiration as *materia prima*—the “undifferentiated” subject matter of Roland Barthes' terminology—allows textual influence to become an embodied creative process (176).

The foremost influences on my style are Australian poets. I can easily trace the intimacy and economy of Dorothy Porter, the avant-garde fragmentation of Michael Farrell, and the speed and acerbic irony of John Forbes in these poems. Apropos length, pacing and the critical voice in these poems I consider the work of Ken Bolton to be the lodestar, especially in process poems like “Ode to Tom Roberts” (1: 59-61), “Salon Des Refusés” (2: 108-19), and “This Too Has Colour (Scatole Personali)” (3: 156-64). Rather than addressing specifically ekphrastic poetry, I mention these poets to demonstrate how their influence is able to be adapted to the task of writing an ekphrastic poem for an occasion.⁵

In the same way, poets from the New York School—including Ashbery, O'Hara, James Schuyler, and Kenneth Koch—are all vital to this collection. Though they might not have been writing *in response to* visual artists of their time, they were writing *like* the visual artists of their time. As Ashbery remarks, “O'Hara's concept of the poem as the creative act that produced it was strengthened by his intimate experience of [Jackson] Pollock's, [Franz] Kline's and [Willem] de Kooning's great paintings of the late 40s and early 50s” (“Introduction” ix). The painterly aspect of a poem—writing *like* a visual artist—may not be

⁵ This distinction between an ekphrastic poem produced for an occasion and the misnomer of an “ekphrastic poet” is discussed in greater detail in Chapter One (see footnotes 8 (70) & 9 (71)).

traditionally ekphrastic, but through Chapter Two and Chapter Three I adopt this approach to test the limits of my own work's ability to retain ekphrastic properties.⁶

Coming 'after' the existing work of art, the need to adequately address influence is important to any ekphrastic poem, but particularly an abstract ekphrastic poem concerned with reference founded on Varnedoe's conception of abstraction. Abstraction that relies upon existing source material is present in Twombly's work as he incorporates text from poets into the titles of his work and directly onto his canvases. As well as Twombly, other artists have been able to experiment with techniques such as collage, bricolage, sampling and appropriation to quote other artists in their own work. One only needs to think of the way text functions in the neo-expressionist paintings of Jean-Michel Basquiat. His works are never purely figurative nor purely textual, but a combination of both: featuring traditional figures within a collage of text that makes reference to overheard speech, the dates of specific events, misheard or mistranslated words, words intentionally struck-through in order to draw attention to them. The words become one more material to be incorporated into the surface in the moment of composition; "rethinking what it means to make a mark" at all (Gere & Rohr 6). As I borrow these techniques that originated in visual art, I am acknowledging my presence "after" existing works of art through quotation. The use of these techniques is in this way ekphrastic. As a revision of Horace's statement of equivalence in a less medium specific way: as in one art-form, so in another. The metaphors of walking-along-*with*, meandering in the space of and following in the footsteps of another work are liberating for the ekphrastic

⁶ Specific poetic influences based upon the selection contained in Twombly's library became the source material for interpretive creative work can be found in Chapter Three. This source includes influential poets as varied as those from the Ancient Greek and Roman eras, the Romantic era, the Modern era, with a particular focus on German and Greek poets, and the transcendental Latin poetics of Octavio Paz. A full list is contained in Mary Jacobus' *Poetry in Paint* on p.285.

poet because they offer an alternative to the representation-of-a-representation approach.⁷

Approaching ekphrasis as an extension of influence and intertextual reference, the duty of description is replaced by intimacy, engagement and proximity to the referent work of art.

The places written into these poems are local, national and international, but always presented through the prism of lived experience and the body. Local galleries such as the Experimental Art Foundation (now ACE Open), the Adelaide Centre for Creative Photography and the Art Gallery of South Australia are the source of the earlier poems written in Chapter One and Two. In both of the first two chapters, the location of the poems and galleries moves from these local settings to the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the S H Ervin Gallery in Sydney, as well as the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, where I was fortunate enough to visit on research trips in September 2017. The poetry in Chapter Three takes place in Italy in the footsteps of Twombly. It begins in Rome and I write my way ‘to the sea’ at Gaeta, the seaside village where the painter lived for the last 20 years of his life. The final poem in both the first and second chapters foreshadows this final literal and metaphoric departure that took place in October of 2017.

This project marks a departure from the conventions of traditional, descriptive ekphrastic writing, informed and inspired by the possibilities of Ashbery’s poem and Varnedoe’s theory of abstraction, lived through a poetics of intimacy and attention. My orienting principles are

⁷ These central metaphors are each derived from a specific work of literature which instantiates a different approach to ekphrastic writing. The first, ‘a walking-along-with’ is taken from a statement from Cole Swensen’s essay on ekphrasis “To Writewithise” and is quoted in greater detail in the first chapter’s essay, “Ekphrasis as Event”. The metaphor of ‘meandering’ is extrapolated from Paul Hetherington’s book of ekphrastic poetry *Gallery of Antique Art* and is paired with Ken Bolton’s reluctant ekphrastic poem “Dark Heart” in the second chapter’s essay “A ‘meandering’ Line”. The final metaphor of ‘footsteps’ is taken from Richard Holmes’ memoir *Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer*. His ability to divine new historical and critical information from close attention to the life of the artist that he is writing about heavily influenced my own poetic practice and is explored further in the final chapter.

the very fundamentals of what ekphrasis must keep with it as it ventures towards the limits of reference.

Whilst I have stressed the importance of Ashbery as the “watershed” moment in contemporary ekphrastic writing and what I see as the most important influence on my own work of abstract ekphrasis, it would be remiss of me not to mention the work of poets in this century who have advanced the practice of writing in response to works of art. Kevin Young’s *To Repel Ghosts: Five Sides in B Minor* (2001) is a phenomenal “riff” on the life and art of Basquiat. The broad strokes of influence present in this biographically inspired book of poetry make it neither biography nor traditional ekphrasis, but an example of the poet taking an invitation from the work of the painter and blurring subject positions by incorporating various elements from the painter’s sphere of influence. As the critic John Taylor remarks, Young takes material that was influential to the painter both within and outside of the paintings to “vibrantly evoke” Basquiat’s work (97); something akin to what I have tried to do with the work of Twombly in “Footsteps”. As a response to a single work of art, Mark Doty’s *Still Life with Oysters and Lemons* (2001) expounds the possibility for ekphrasis as a lengthy prose meditation that provides a tour of the attitudes and contextualising factors that affect the speakers interpretation of the artwork. Like Ashbery’s “Self Portrait”, this poem treats the work of art as a provocation; as a prompt for the poet. Whilst this poem is not poetic in its lineation, it treats the creative work of an artist as the inspiration for a piece of creative art; what I will discuss as an “artefact” in Chapter One. The many detours that Doty takes throughout his poem informs the meandering method of Chapter Two, but his desire to return to the painting as the initial source of reference and to title his poem the same as the painting makes this poem most similar to the work of mine in “Walking Along-With”. Similarly, Derek Walcott’s long poem *Tiepolo’s Hound* (2000) treats

an original referent image as the opportunity for the speaker's meditation and reflection.

Walcott's speaker destabilises the notions of origin and originality as a matter of postcolonial writing. This process envisages the translation from one context to another as an "act of imagination" (Neumann 456), such that a postcolonial writer's project is much the same as an ekphrastic poet. Using creativity to generate an original take on something already created—be that culture or a work of visual art—the original is embodied and reimagined through a creative practice. To see the act of writing ekphrasis as an "act of imagination" certainly conforms with the desire to invent an approach to an existing work of art and to personalise an encounter with art in a way that is creatively fruitful. These three works that I mention here represent a personalisation of the act of writing in response to art in a way that would not have been possible without the precedent of Ashbery's poem. My own take on Ashbery's poem, when combined with Varnedoe's theory of abstraction, extends on these contemporary approaches to develop three ways of enmeshing the personal within the experience of ekphrastic writing.

It is my position that an abstract ekphrasis must fulfil two criteria. The first is that it must retain a discernible link to an original work of art. The second is that it must be a creative and unique piece of art itself. By this rationale, I exclude poetry that cannot reasonably be linked to an existing work of art (either descriptively, stylistically, intertextually or by proximity), and writing where the sole function is not creative from the outset (something like a review, catalogue essay or artist statement).

The abstract ekphrastic poem must be referential and creative in order for the poem to be considered equivalent to the work of art, as a creative artefact itself. As evidence of their

attention and intimacy, the abstract ekphrastic poet must be both interpretively and creatively disposed in the process of writing their ekphrastic poem.

As the poems in Chapter One are directly referential, incorporating research and affect, the poetry extends from this approach in the second and third chapters. In Chapter Two, the ekphrastic poem is considered as a vehicle for the critical apparatus that develops the poem as its own object as the result from the poet's critical-creative process. In Chapter Three, the ekphrastic poem places the least amount of importance on the art-object's surface as possible by returning to the elemental aspects of a work's composition. This includes an intimate examination and re-living of the physical and intellectual context of an artist's process, that builds upon Rosenberg's assessment of the abstract expressionists to see the work of art and the life of the artist as indistinguishable.

Intimacy and equivalence are vital to this thesis, as ways for the ekphrastic poem to be re-imagined and adapted for a more contemporary approach to writing creatively not only in response to, but also in the space of, works of art.

CHAPTER ONE

POETRY: *‘Walking-Along-With’*



Belem Lett

I got home from work and sat on the toilet scrolling then remembered i needed to paint a self portrait for the Archibald so I took a selfie and continued to scroll (2017)

oil on aluminium composite panel

S H Ervin Gallery

Self Portrait after Belem Lett

this is you
this is you & yours
the experience is
as intimate
as divine
as finding water
the exact
temperature
of a mirror's surface
that when you move
to touch it
—as elusive
as I can be
you find yourself
being that elusive too—
extracting from that
same well
it's this
it's you & yours
& this can still be yours
the song remains the same
ersatz perhaps
but if a path is made
by walking it
let me walk it
along with you

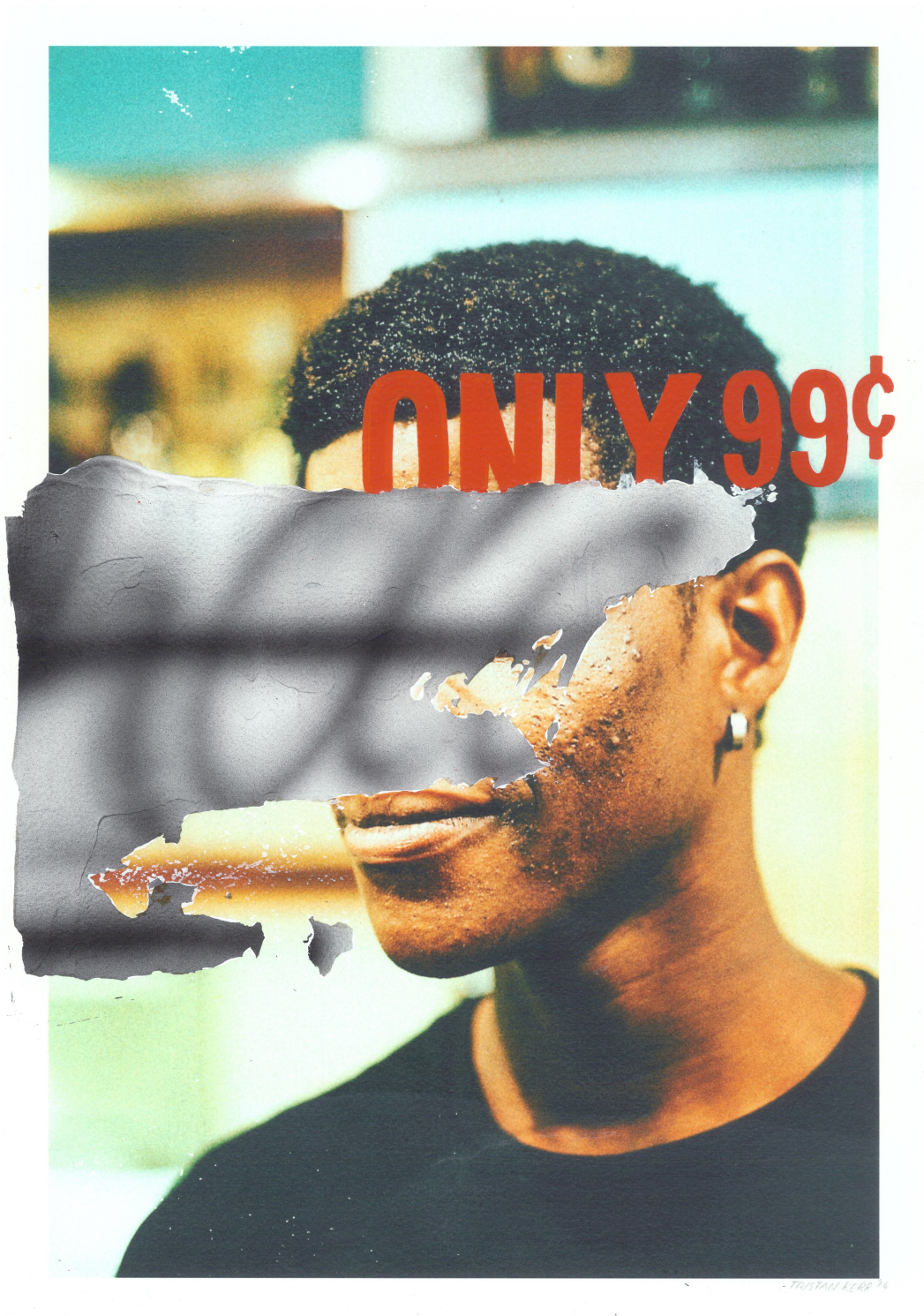


Thomas McCammon & Tristan Kerr
Invoking the Muse (2017)
acrylic on photographic paper
Adelaide Centre for Creative Photography

“Paradise” after Tristan Kerr & Thomas McCammon

1. Invoking the Muse

you don't say
did you / does W
/ this it's this
line here
the weight of it
breaks me up
we're friends
 / you know
I always
crack windows
when I'm polishing
them W says
well pick up
that rock &
put it to use
 / it's only the
afternoon
after all you
have it / my
permission
to react



Thomas McCammon & Tristan Kerr
Pandaemonium (2017)
acrylic on photographic paper
Adelaide Centre for Creative Photography

2. Pandaemonium

elaborate
on this / like
waking up
after a power
failure you
fumble darkly
around / W is
all shock value
singed fingers
& round we go
diffracted
I make note
in secret
how with each
revolution
the screw turns
tighter / W is
the coat rack
like pruned back
branches
waiting for
a stormy day
/ names have been
redacted



Thomas McCammon & Tristan Kerr
The Tree of Life (2017)
acrylic on photographic paper
Adelaide Centre for Creative Photography

3. The Tree of Life

W says call this
my own personal
refracted splendour
dispenser
& stepping out
its how the sun
/ darts around
off the shards
how the high water
mark swells
how thought bubbles
foam / pop & it's
the same wind
that blows us
both it's loss
I mean love I insist
if you lived here
you'd be home
by now / W says
keep me
/ out of the
picture



Thomas McCammon & Tristan Kerr
Innocent Slumber (2017)
acrylic on photographic paper
Adelaide Centre for Creative Photography

4. Innocent Slumber

in W's bedtime story
the boy is caught
by his collar
on the moon
waning crescent
/ stays there
indefinitely
/ the record
skips but I say
leave it I'm
not rote learning
now W
look around
the new
thing / this buzz
it's not ours
we can't do
anything
with it / but
this is living
& I hand you
this book
without an
ending like
you / keep it



TRISTAN KERR '16

Thomas McCammon & Tristan Kerr
The Offered Cup (2017)
 acrylic on photographic paper
 Adelaide Centre for Creative Photography

5. The Offered Cup

there's a word
for a bell with a crack
in it that I've
forgotten / but
I can hear the
contour of it
when I'm with you
/ I'm inside it
like a promise
to stop by again
/ jasmine
growing on a
crowded street
W stops a pearl
-escent tear
falling / W is
worried about
the light
contracting
/ folding in
I'm calm / I
say love
I mean
love



Thomas McCammon & Tristan Kerr
Amorous Repose (2017)
acrylic on photographic paper
Adelaide Centre for Creative Photography

6. Amorous Repose

W & I never met
why I played it
that way
on purpose
/ but I'm careful
not to overstate
the fact
I'm shy did
I overhear
you say
paradise /
a sympathy
& a welcome
W strokes
my aching
brow & I think
lips are only
made intimate by
contact / you
agree / too much
depends on
sweet parting



Ben Quilty
Self Portrait, the Executioner (2015)
oil on linen
195.0 x 140.4
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Self Portrait, the Executioner after Ben Quilty

It makes you squint
the way the harbour does
still reeling
no hard feelings or
theory
the argument
goes quiet
just the sun
creeping in
lamp posts patient
as guillotines
these earrings
for ceilings
rings that no finger
could hope to fill
are soon to be removed
here self portrait
as the executioner
considers the decorative
heroic
the sort of art
inspired by bad news



Lucian Freud
And the Bridegroom (1993)
oil on canvas
231.8 × 195.9
Art Gallery of New South Wales

And The Bridegroom after Lucien Freud

furnishing our room
the first day
I point out the slant
of the floorboard:
an opinion the room can't shake

you don't see it yourself
but I allow for some bias
in everything—like
complex mathematics
where the errors are built-in
to the equation

intimate misconceptions
deciding where this bed will lie
so our heads don't swell
while we're asleep
& in the hope we won't
slide off making love

tonight
at the gallery
looking at that couple
in the painting
being tipped out of the canvas
I feel I might
be right about the slant
& am proved right
when we get home
I knock a glass of water over

it trickles
towards the street
desperate
to surpass
the limits of
this tiny room



Installation View of:

Mikala Dwyer
A Shape of Thought (2017)
aluminium and helium
Art Gallery of New South Wales
(image uncredited)

A Shape of Thought after Mikala Dwyer

so like

where is the best place to stand?

above or below it? beside it?

one gets a choice

but (importantly) you've blown it already

it's probably best to be writing outside of it

anyway & here I am

speculating your obsession with materials

as using circles

in a work says (more or less)

I haven't the desire to

develop a theme for this

so I'll let you take a shot

are we the ones aiming our air rifles (critically)

& is your work (immaterially) this

succession of thought emptied out?

a shining canopy

in solidarity against this concrete

conception of oppositional thinking

I've gravitated towards before

friends talking me down from

the edge of expressing

an empty sentiment

tho I'm too tired to be considering

effectively this line of thinking

like Yeats says "poetry is an argument
with the self"

& I'm losing

to an opponent

on the side of art history

hovering above my head

toward the bottom of the escalator

experiencing *esprit d'escalier*

amassing things I wish I'd said

before I descended

now I see it differently

how it's like nothing

holding up nothing

never having to stand by

what you've said



Arthur Streeton
Above us the great grave sky (1890)
oil on canvas
73.0 x 36.8
National Gallery of Australia

Above Us the Great Grave Sky after Arthur Streeton

1.

above us the great grave sky

above us the abstract ominous
hope inflected past
perfect continuous

above us the singular metaphor
ascends prophetic
brushed with meaning

above us the keen clear song
you bring to love
the irresolute present

nameless
you will be given a name

as the moment slips past
tenseless

2.

restless
goosebumps
as the temperature drops
starts dropping
my stomach
the pits
excited fizz
taken to the surface
a body admired
the sun goes down
on the horizon
without an anorak
a scarf or
anything smart to say
nothing yet
to tie our strange
bodies in twain
an expectation of
instead I shift
uncomfortably
helpless
insatiably distracted

love — that chill
on your skin
your bare shoulders
grabs you by
takes you
takes all of your
attention

3.

tension
when you blink
I take the moment
of reprieve
to remind myself
this isn't a date

stop blinking

stop

4.

spot any other
canvas you might like to take
you can have it
but this one I agonise over
altering each nuanced
expression of their bodies
the scrub the moon
 these lovers
you can have it
once they become
just brushstrokes
again

5.

(when I find it)

my first love's
gonna be my last

(I have never waned)

my first love's
gonna be my last

6.

pastoral
 twilight pastoral
pastoral
 idyll
twilight pastoral
Heidelberg

7.

urgently naked
 beneath five
maybe six blankets
canberra's coldest
night as fog waits
on median strips
to pass the night
roads widely anti
-cipating this thousand
year city among
vast scrub retained
over years of pur-
posed pastoralisation
frost on the gum tree
a hangover
inherited from
our neighbours
as the sun hit the
aluminium rims
of our tins at
twilight we saw
an amber flare
with amorous eyes
we took with us
to bed we don't need
need Keats
or Byron
 as below
 the moon
 below the
clouds
 below these
blankets
 it's you

8.

from the spot where we last
lay dreaming together—yourself
and I—the soft grass beneath
us gleaming

above us the great grave sky



Tom Roberts
Going Home (1889)
oil on cigar box lid
23.4 x 13.6
National Gallery of Australia

Ode to TOM ROBERTS

this
is my story &
I'm sticking to you
TOM

as essential to mystery
as the TOM ROBERTS aisle
is to any survey of
AUSTRALIAN
IMPRESSIONISM

I'm looking thru you

like a packet of butter
from the hotel buffet
turns my pocket translucent

pants I can't change out of

a reminder
realism is real

I love that you weren't
McCUBBIN
CONDER
or STREETON

that these
nine by fives
did not require
three people
to move them
out

into the
PASTORAL

young TOM
& your cigar box lids

were I to hold my breath

long enough
you could have sketched
me — maybe

a streetscape in the
time it takes to skull a beer

bulldog
your mates called you

slightly balding
even then at 26

I believe you
would have been good
to drink a beer with

chatty not
overly idealistic

ROMANTIC
but certainly not utopian

beauty
in your hands (& mine
unless this is betraying
history)

brief

that rush to glimpse it
/ that rush when
you glimpse it

young TOM

it's twelve & the Exeter
has been open for an hour

there's hardly anyone in here TOM
the showers have cleared
& the sun

kicks up off the pavement

sit with me TOM

a dark ale
in front of me
my notebook
a pen lent to me
by a flight attendant

a student I taught
last semester
stops to talk to me
asks me what I'm doing

TOM TOM everything
so cursory

his reflection passing
in the puddles

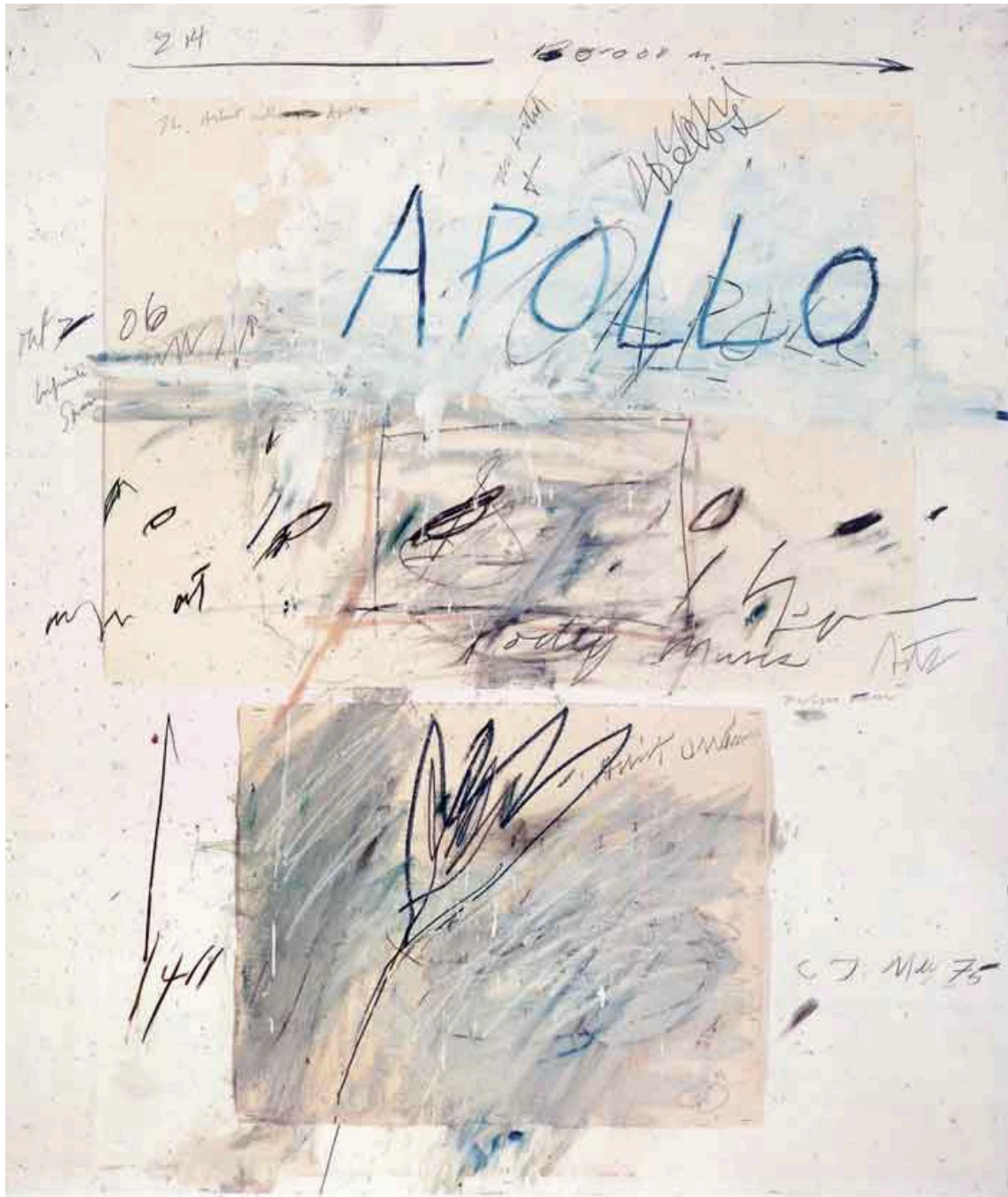
muted
the exact quality of the light
the faces

the light
I don't remember changing

(tho it must have)

old TOM your eyes
worn out from all that detail
in THE BIG PICTURE

young TOM
an impression
rendered faithfully
yours



Cy Twombly
Apollo and the Artist (1975)
 oil paint, wax crayon, pencil and collage on paper
 142 x 128
 Tate Modern, London

Apollo and the Artist after Cy Twombly

& so the same wind blows us both

a gentle *tilt*

my head

both in the clouds &

cushioned by the grass

looking up squinting

to associate you with it

& it with you

as today proliferates

it eschews unnecessary admissions

before you came in this morning

I was writing words in the dark words

I didn't want you to read

words so convincing

so entangled in verisimilitude

I was worried you might believe them to be true

to be autobiographical

(to be honest)

nothing is
pure surface

despite the drawn out Mediterranean afternoon

we take a detour along the cliffs of Gaeta

to get home quicker

tracing the contours

when we undress each other

taste each other

the salt spray

evidence on our skin

waves colliding with the coast

the shore inexorable

without the ages insisting & relenting

is this white mist just frustration?

th' expense of spirit?

verification

that what we are sharing is real?

#

as you fall asleep I ask Apollo

why he keeps putting things on shelves I can't reach

brought to my knees

scratching at the walls

reduced to

retrogressing

the morning glory closing over

as the afternoon cedes to evening

back to the first time

you said you never go that far

with someone you hardly know

back to bathing in each other's sweat

feet wrapped in tangled sheets

that same night

you said nothing is perfect

the first time

& we continue painting over it

again

& again &again

a continuing burial

pressing on

unsure if we ever will finish

if we *are* finished

#

& so between Apollo and the Artist

between the grass

& the clouds

somewhere

in the middle.

**ESSAY: Ekphrasis as Event: *Poets Paint Words* and the
Performance of Ekphrasis in Australia.**

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Newcastle Region Art Gallery (NRAG) in 2007, Lisa Slade and Peter Minter co-curated the exhibition *Poets Paint Words* (PPW). Some of Australia's most renowned poets were commissioned to write poems in response to a selection of paintings held in the NRAG archive. Between 24 March and 17 June at the NRAG, poems were hung beside the paintings.



“Same Level” Installation view of PPW1.
March-June 2007.
L-R: Savage/Dobell, Beveridge/Olley, Fagan/Cossington Smith
(Photo courtesy of Peter Minter)

The success of this exhibition was followed two years later with PPW 2 that ran from 16 May to 5 July 2009. Significantly for the study of contemporary ekphrasis in Australia, Slade and Minter's curatorial decision to display the poems and paintings at the same level allowed poets to diverge from the mimetic tradition of notional-ekphrastic and actual-

ekphrastic poetry by removing the descriptive imperative: the poet need not describe the images that the reader can view with their own eyes beside the poem. The implications of this physical and metaphoric equivalence will be explored in this chapter, by acknowledging PPW as the “Event” that signalled the possibilities for the future of ekphrasis in Australia.

As an “Event”—terminology that I borrow from Alain Badiou—I wish to investigate how poets viewed, composed and exhibited their work within specific spatiotemporal conditions. Badiou’s term, defined as a set of circumstances that encourage “chance” when “the moment is ripe for intervention”, suggests the possibility for revolutionary new modes of thinking to emerge (“Théorie du Sujet” 187). Commissioned to write in response to one painting in the knowledge that this poem would be hung alongside the painting meant that the *public* Event of PPW set meaningful constraints on the poets’ *personal* Event: their process of composition. The directness of the poets’ address and attention is a feature of this mode of performative ekphrastic writing that I want to investigate using statements from the poets themselves and the performative research theories of Barbara Bolt. As Bolt asserts, a focus on process within the production of an artefact invokes a poetics of performance that allows work to “produce” rather than “represent” reality (“Art Beyond” 89). The move away from representation highlights the importance of this theory in developing the abstract ekphrastic framework that is fundamental to this thesis. Understanding the creative process as “trekking paths that others have trekked before”—being “sensitive” and “aware” to existing artefacts (Bolt “Shedding Light” 208)—this reading of PPW as an Event provides an analysis of Australian poets writing about Australian paintings to arrive at a uniquely Australian performance-based ekphrasis.

To better grasp the significance of the Event, it is worth considering the poets and artists who contributed to the exhibition. Poets included Robert Adamson, Kate Fagan, Martin Harrison, Jill Jones, John Kinsella, Peter Minter, Les Murray, Dorothy Porter, and John Tranter. Similarly, the list of Australian artists surveyed by the poets is no less significant, including Arthur Boyd, Grace Cossington Smith, William Dobell, Margaret Olley, John Olsen, Imants Tillers, Albert Tucker, and Brett Whiteley. Rather than providing an examination of a theme or an epoch, what is apparent from this incongruous array of painters is that this exhibition sought to be a site-specific sampling of the collection. The *public* Event of PPW was an occasion where proximity necessitated opposing forces to combine. These conditions evoke what Brian Castro has termed “heterotopias”—a unique feature of the thematically disjointed but spatiotemporally linked contemporary landscape of literature in Australia (117). PPW afforded these points of collision where new texts were able to be created, instead of attempting to promulgate a coherent idea or ideology. Daniel Bensaïd, elaborating on the foundations of Badiou’s Event, describes one function of an Event to be “propitious ripeness of the opportune moment” (96).

That many of the painters in the exhibition were not alive in 2007 or 2009 serves as a reminder that the ekphrastic encounter is a collision, not a collaboration: a unique moment. To further expand on this concept of the Event as a chance encounter instead of a formal attempt to categorise or define a vision of Australian ekphrasis (like a conference or a special issue of a poetry review), it is true that Australian poets have had opportunities to engage with ekphrastic writing in different ways for many years.⁸ It is important to

⁸ On ekphrasis as an occasional practice, there are groups of poets such as DiVerse, who have an ongoing series of projects in conjunction with the State Gallery of NSW to “write poetry based on artworks or museum exhibits, performing the poems in the exhibition spaces” (Kennedy 3). At present the Nillimbuk Shire Ekphrasis Poetry Award and the Queensland Poetry Festival Phillip Bacon Ekphrasis Prize are two competitions that further enhance the culture of occasional ekphrastic writing in Australia.

remember that contributors to PPW were selected on their reputation as poets: not specifically as “ekphrastic poets”.⁹ Similarly, the poets were not aware of what the other poets were writing nor was there any collaboration between any of the poets. There was no attempt to editorialise on behalf of the curators, nor were the poets asked to contribute any exegetical material to the exhibition, as might have been the case if there was oversight to formalise a version of Australian ekphrasis. As I have stated above, the aspirations of the curators were simply to bring poets in to contact with paintings in the NRAG archives, therefore, the inferences and findings that I present here treat the poetry contributed to PPW as raw data.

To better explicate the properties of this *public* Event, it is significant that the artworks and poems were exhibited at the same line of sight. This allowed the audience to cross-reference text and image, and removed the necessity for the poet to describe the image. However, the temporal restrictions of the exhibition meant these conditions lasted only as long as the artworks and poems were hanging. There have previously been several different approaches to this simultaneous contemplation of poem and artwork. The DiVerse group of poets in Sydney have given out pamphlets with poems printed on them for patrons to walk through the gallery whilst an exhibition is hung. This same group have also given readings alongside paintings in the gallery. High-quality reproductions of paintings alongside an ekphrasis in

⁹ By this point I mean that one is not referred to as an “ekphrastic poet” in the way that one might be referred to as an “environmental poet”. Whilst ekphrasis as a productive creative exercise has accounted for a surge in the worldwide popularity of the form and while many poets have had experience writing ekphrastic poems, it is rare to find an example of a book length collection of ekphrastic poems by one poet on multiple paintings: as a *continuous project* rather than an *occasional practice*. It is even rarer to posit the existence of an “ekphrastic poet” in Australia, with the exception of Melbourne poet Peter Steele, who published two collections of ekphrastic poetry, perhaps comes closest to what one might call an “ekphrastic poet”. The combination of American poet Cole Swensen’s award-winning collection *Try* (1999) with her exegetical essays on the topic in *Noise That Stays Noise* (2011), mark her as another potential candidate for the title. For a more comprehensive survey of poems and poets engaged with ekphrasis, I recommend Robert D. Denham’s *Poets on Paintings: A Bibliography* (2010)—for the record he counts 31 books as fitting the above description of a “Volume by a single poet on multiple paintings”. This list includes the aforementioned titles by Young, Doty, Walcott, Steele and Swensen.

gallery books—like Peter Steele’s *Plenty* and *A Whispering Gallery*—have allowed both poem and painting to be considered as text and read simultaneously in a permanent way after an exhibition has ended. Similarly, the digitization of gallery archives online has improved the public availability of artworks and to ekphrastic projects. The Guggenheim’s exhibition *Storylines*—launched physically in 2015—remains online and provides a virtual gallery tour, where hovering over a thumbnail image of the artwork provides a hyperlink to a writer’s commissioned ekphrastic response (Armstrong, n.p) By making requests to the individual authors and the archivists at NRAG I am able to include these poems in this essay, as it is essential to remember that these poems were always intended to be read whilst the audience had an opportunity to view the image at the same time.

As one of the two fundamentals of an abstract ekphrastic poem outlined in my introduction, the need to retain a discernible link to the original work of art is built-in to the *public* Event of PPW. This allows space for the influence of the existing work of art to manifest in other, less descriptive, ways in the poem. The direct, but non-descriptive reference to an existing work of art may instead manifest in the poet’s aspiration for stylistic equivalence present in the “textual features of the poem”; such as the “pacing, fragmentation, sound and rhythm and imaginative ‘visual’ associations that occur” (Freiman 6).

Seen this way in PPW, the *personal* Event is the poet’s active viewing of the painting and the performance of their interpretation of the work of art is captured in the ekphrastic poem. As a commissioned poem in response to a single artwork to be read/viewed alongside the artwork, the conditions of PPW as a *public* Event draw our attention to the process of the poet.

Fiona Harari's article in the *Weekend Australian Magazine* provides the following account of Kate Fagan's process in PPW 1:

Teamed with *Trees* by Grace Cossington Smith, whose work she has long admired, Fagan found the process of writing about such a vibrant piece of art to be unlike the writing of any other poem she has produced. "I have certainly not walked into a room before with an object and been asked to build that relationship," says Fagan, 34.

After reading up on the artist's life and scanning some of her old, handwritten letters, Fagan went through twelve drafts before settling on her final wording. "I loved it, I really did," she says of the experience. "When I walked into the room with the painting, it was literally humming with life and colour." (Harari 28)

Fagan's use of the term "relationship" suggests a similar schematisation of the contemporary ekphrastic mode set out by Cole Swensen in her essay *To Writewithize*, that invokes:

works that don't *look at* art so much as *live with* it. The principal difference here is not the verb but the preposition. A side-by-side, a walking-along-*with*, replaces the face-to-face relationship, the two – the poem and the artwork are presumed to be going in the same direction and at the same speed; they are fellow travellers sharing the same context. (Swensen 70)

This shared context in the Event of PPW provides the dynamic between poem and artwork that Fagan and other poets accomplished in the exhibition: "a walking-along-*with*". Rather than deferring to the intentional disposition of another agent in an ill-fated attempt to attain

‘correctness’ or ‘perfection’, Gregory Pardlo reiterates the importance of the ekphrastic “encounter” (587). This is a measure of how the poet takes ownership of their lived experience and communicates this in their poem (Pardlo 587). As a direct response to an individual painting, this metaphor of walking-along-*with* suggests that the point of arrival is the final version of the poem hung alongside the painting, viewed simultaneously. However, what is vital in this mode is the encounter; the process of the walking-along-*with* that ultimately is integrated into the poem.

Fagan’s process statement reveals these essential properties for walking-along-*with* a painting: firstly, awareness of sensory cues that are present in the viewing and secondly research into relevant contextual information about the work’s production. The second stanza in Ivy Ireland’s poem “What We Do For Survival” from PPW 2 reveals much about the sensory experience of viewing a painting for the first time, as she addresses the associative forms as they appear to her in viewing Jon Cattapan’s work *Body Chart*. She writes:

The only world we can cope with
is this shopping list of perceptions:
Round bottomed flask,
orphic egg, Aurora Borealis, lung sack,
runes in cubes seeming to square the circle,
Tetragrammaton in a cyclic continuum
trailing off the canvas, off this Perspex page. (7)

Recall that for Fagan it is Cossington Smith's canvas "literally humming with life and colour" that she takes note of immediately (qtd. in Harari 28). The poet goes through the same interpretive process as any other viewer of the painting and the reader/viewer trusts that there will be a correlation between their affective experience of the painting and the poet's. With the painting in the viewer's line of sight, the poet may bring the audience into their own interpretative-creative process to create another direct link between the two media in lieu of description.

Ireland's "shopping list of perceptions" suggest the fraught nature of the *personal* ekphrastic Event with an opening night deadline looming. Having caught the train to Newcastle to view John Olsen's *Life Burst*, Jill Jones recounts the sensation that she was working under time constraints. Her first impulse was to write down her sensory associations in the hope that these might spark a line that would eventually find its way into the poem once she had adequate time to write it (pers. comm.). Marcelle Freiman labels these "affect responses":

Affect responses triggered by 'seeing' in any instance are subjective, differentiated and specific to the moment of the response – here seeing an artwork (bringing to this action everything else that is going on in the writer writing) and responding to its content, form, energy, colour and materiality. (Freiman 6)

If this first stage of the ekphrastic process is summarised in Freiman's terms—as *seeing*—then the material state of the painting and the visceral impact this has on the poet is strongest as the poet attempts to forge this new relationship based upon visual sensory cues.

Accordingly, the second stage of the ekphrastic process involves *reading*, as the poet attempts to take their comprehension of the visual work beyond the sensory and into the realm of the intellectual and intentional. Fagan's process included, "reading up on the artist's life and scanning some of her old, handwritten letters" to buttress her response in something other than the "humming" of the painting's material surface (qtd. in Harari 28).

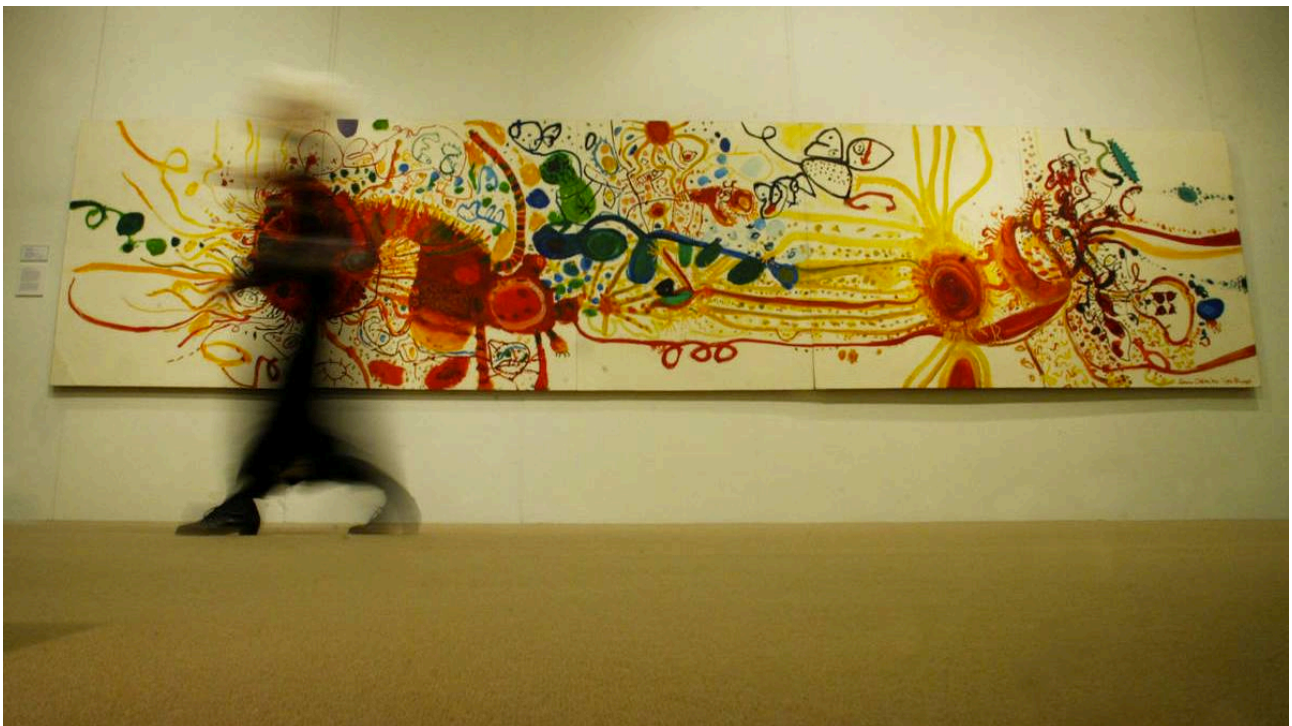
Fagan's statement suggests an intentionalist position regarding the interpretation of works of art. In the experience of writing a poem in response to a representational work of art, the intention of the artist may be more obvious (to represent a particular object), and therefore, of less importance to the poet in their creative-interpretive process. However, when writing in response to a non-representational work of art, the intention of the artist may become more valuable to the poet, as the accuracy of their reference is bound to come under scrutiny during a simultaneous comparison between word and image. Acknowledging the reader/viewer's search for a discernible link between artwork and poem, the poet interested in being a "capable respondent" should be attentive to the intention of the artist (Zangwill 178). Ireland's poem demonstrates this attention in response to the non-representational gestures in Cattapan's dark, colour-field painting. Because the interpretation of an artwork in this mode takes place after the painting is complete, the interpretive act can be best understood as "retrieval" of the artist's intentions (Carroll "Art Interpretation" 118).

Intentionalist philosopher Noël Carroll's position on the interpretation of art considers:

all the relevant contextual information, including knowledge about the art-historical context, about the genre in question, about the author's past works, and, in addition,

common, publicly available information about the life of the artist. (“Interpretation and Intention” 79)

Accounting for “past works” as part of this *reading* phase, Fagan describes Cossington Smith as an artist, “whose work she had long admired” (Harari 28). For Jones, the previous work of Olsen was crucially influential in her process as she recalls organising a function at the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts in the Sydney Opera House where Olsen’s work *Salute to Five Bells* is exhibited. She suggests this prior knowledge tempered her reaction to *Life Burst* as a work of comparable size and scale (pers. comm.).



Installation view of:

John Olsen
Life Burst (1964)
acrylic on plaster on hardboard
3 panels
146.4 x 641.0cm
Gift of the Sir William Dobell Art Foundation 1976
Newcastle Regional Art Gallery Collection
(image uncredited)

Viewing an artwork as an intentionally created object offers an insight into the fundamental distinction between an ekphrastic poem and a poem of any other type: that both the work of art and the poem are *artefacts*. Therefore, the content of the poem's reference is not naturally existing, but an "intentional manifestation of mind" (Wollheim "Art, Interpretation, and Perception" 134). Likewise, in the act of writing the poem the poet is not simply viewing, but viewing with the intention to create some new artefact of their own. Therefore, in a case like PPW research conducted into the painter's process is vital to the act of walking-along-*with*.

As a revision of James Heffernan's definition of ekphrasis used in the Introduction, it is true that ekphrasis is "a verbal representation of a graphic representation", but crucially, this reading stresses that the graphic representation has been intentionally created. A landscape differs from a painting of a landscape and analogously, an ekphrastic poem differs from a pastoral poem because the landscape that a pastoral poet describes is not mediated through an external intentional actor. Philosopher Richard Wollheim suggests that, "if we are interested in painting as such or individual paintings, we must start with the artist" ("Painting as an Art" 36). To display a discernible link to the original artefact and act as a "capable respondent" in the absence of representational cues an ekphrastic poet relies on the retrieval of these intentions.

Ireland's poem speaks to the intricate balance between affect responses and interpretation as an embodied process:

Consciousness is not the only node

responding to this inoculation of meaning –
the body catches flame, also. (7)

Ireland could equally be writing Cattapan's process here; his "body [catching] flame" as he paints. Process is a vital part of the intimate link created by the poet to the work of art, incorporating the artist's process into the process of the poet. The process of each poet in the exhibition is a *personal* Event, whereby bringing another artist's process into their own compositional process they arrive at a new unique, but referential *artefact*.

To put this another way, reading the artist's process as an "invariant", Paul Ricoeur's concept is that "fact will then be circumscribed as one variant engendered by the individualization [sic] of these invariants" (Ricoeur 148). The process embedded in the artist's artefact is individualised through the poet's lived experience of it and that the poem then emerges as a new fact, or an *artefact*: an equally process-dependent and irreducibly individual, creative product. It is clear through the site-specific and heterotopic features of the exhibition that PPW was an Australian Event that related to its audience the literal equivalence between the poem and the painting by hanging them at the same level. But the *personal* Event of the ekphrastic poet, considered as metaphorically equivalent to the process of the artist who has created the artefact to which their poem responds, is what I wish to explore as an abstract ekphrasis with a uniquely Australian origin.

In *Art Beyond Representation* Barbara Bolt suggests a "critical distinction between the work of art (as a verb) and an artwork (as a noun)" (111). When considering the bringing-into-being of an artefact, whether that be a poem or a work of art (or a poem about a work of art) what we are talking about is the lived narrative of that process: the "work" of art, that shows

the *personal* Event as an emergence of new information. Bolt references Heidegger's assertion that, "lived experience is the source that is the standard not only for art appreciation and enjoyment but also for artistic creation" (qtd. in Bolt "Art Beyond" 85). Yet temporally, for the ekphrastic poet, the experience of appreciation and interrogation is *simultaneously* also the experience of creation. The "process" is co-emergent with the final "product". Bolt has asserted this type of work as "performance": "performance produces real or material effects. It produces rather than represents reality" ("Art Beyond" 136).

Bolt adapts this approach from Paul Carter's *The Lie of the Land*, where the author describes the rituals of Australian First Nations people as *methexis*: "an act of concurrent actual production, a pattern danced on the ground" (96). Bolt sees the practice of art in an Australian setting to be at the mercy of the glaring sun that forces one's head down to watch what one's feet are doing ("Shedding Light" 209). The "patterns danced on the ground" are the performative actions of the artist who is immersed in the lived experience of the *personal* Event.

Bolt suggests that *methexis* "is a performative model where the 'landscape' emerges through the tracing of patterns on the ground" ("Shedding Light" 209). Whether these traces are considered original or whether one is following "paths others had trekked before", Bolt ventures that when living under the harsh Australian sun, "One always kept one's eyes to the ground in order to be sensitive and aware of the folds, the contours, the inclines, and the mess of the landscape" ("Shedding Light" 208). This demonstrates a productive way of reading the difficult balance for the abstract ekphrastic poet in creating an artefact that is both original and referential. Here though, Bolt confirms that both reference and referent are simultaneously and continuously interpretive and creative.

As an example of *methexis* in practice, Robert Adamson recounts Brett Whiteley's process creating *Summer at Carcoar* by suggesting that, "You could see them [Whiteley's paintings] grow in the studio" (qtd. in Harari 28). Adamson reveals that he travelled to Carcoar with the artist as he studied the landscape, but also, significantly that he was present during Whiteley's process of creating the original artefact (qtd. in Harari 28).



Brett Whiteley
Summer at Carcoar (1977)
oil and mixed media on pine board
244.0 x 199.0
Newcastle Region Art Gallery Collection

Viewing the artist's process as an "invariant" to be individualised in the creative process of the poet, so much of Whiteley's lived creative experience is already a part of Adamson's own. As Adamson hints in the poem to the "highway" that "curves outside the frame", the factors beyond his own personal history helped him to arrive at his response to the work of art as ekphrasis, not memoir. As the painting was brought out for his viewing, he recounts that "this whole part of my past was revealed as well as the painting" (qtd. in Harari 28). To distinguish lived experience from painting Adamson reacquainted himself with the materiality of Whiteley's canvas.

The painter enters	time through the Belubula river,
draws out long	bodies from poplar trees
drenches the air	a naples yellow hue, polishes water flow
to a waxy sheen	until it sings under glowing light
he turns a bend	a joyous curve and quick line
then moves over	paddocks back to the place
where he was born	to embrace ideas of chaos, the accelerating
particles in his head,	paints original county as a garden
over scars, sketches notes	on the edges, a wren flicks its tail up
and brush strokes freeze blue	feathers onto surface
the willow pulses salicylic acid	through his idea of pain
the shape of particular hurting	just under skin
on a rock where a currawong	becomes larger than it was
in life and running under	tissues in a burrow where flecks
of the past gleam through	a green subterranean light
from the Hades of	childhood's fears
a crumbling	ground of families
here we notice	the absence of human figures
and intense English	trees glow
squat under bird song	the sun new pain
rabbits hint at movement,	twitch in grasses
details load themselves	golden paddocks
made up in the mind,	river, memory spilling
its ballast onto	hard discoveries, the ground opened
though intricate	eddies in tides of grass
the ten thousand	brush strokes and branches
of thought	etching themselves under the small sky
feathers	counted each leaf folded
wild	patterns so right you believe the painted world
then	sense an open field believes you while under ground
around	the boiling core Whiteley's scars
indicate mining	around 1905 they discovered
uranium here the	local paper called it 'the parent of radium'
we sense in the painting's	glow stains of undertow
a lash in the black highway	as it curves outside the frame
we too sense the instinct of	marsupials, to tunnel down
and glance flowers, mauve bells	ringing their soft trumpets
then a bee's are describing flight,	a thought becoming amber

Adamson (qtd. in Harari 29)

That Adamson's poem mimics the shape of the river—the predominant shape in Whiteley's painting—is fitting, as in this way Adamson is writing ekphrastically; from his lived experience with the work of art as the physical result of Whiteley's process, not just a lived experience of his own with the painter or with the subject matter that the painter is representing. The function of Adamson presenting his process of viewing the painting within his poem is necessary to create a discernible performative link between the two artefacts. Whereas Adamson's personal history was intimately linked with the painter's, Martin Harrison has no such shared history with Arthur Boyd's *Shoalhaven River, Afternoon II*. Harrison finds a way into the work of Boyd by instantiating the “autobiographical focus” in ekphrastic poetry, of which Alfred Corn in “Notes on Ekphrasis” writes:

The center [sic] of attention in this kind of poem isn't solely the pre-existing work but instead is dual, sharing the autobiographical focus found in the majority of contemporary lyric poems written in English. (n.p)

Individualising the invariants contained in Boyd's painting, Harrison makes use of the shapes and figures on the canvas in “Afternoon”. But where Whiteley's lived experience is a conduit for Adamson's experience—ultimately making it difficult for Adamson to gain the necessary material distance—Harrison's lived experience is solely his viewing of the painting. Harrison refers to the exchange across temporal boundaries that takes place in this moment of contemplation and composition. He writes:

A final thought might be
how
after sex with you

I want the light to be permanent

some utterly sun-drowned afternoon

where intense, golden drifts

freeze across the ranges

“utterly” because

of what is open, airy, so exposed

with a long drift of time and distance

starting in the gap

every gesture’s a response to light

every thought speaks to its change

with a sense of what happens

when dreaming, perhaps inland along a river:

the ripple of a single movement

dissolving a broad hill slope

which just as it

melts in water

stays still enough

trance-like,

to engage us
in our love. (Harrison n.p)

Accounting for the corporeality and intimacy of the exchange in this first stanza, Harrison alludes to a shared post-coital moment where the ekphrasis is written. The poem inhabits the space “after sex with you”, where Harrison’s speaker wishes for “the light to be permanent”. This desire for permanence in a fleeting co-emergent moment of beauty, is beset by Harrison’s use of the present tense verb “freeze” in the seventh line of the poem. This is later juxtaposed by the present participle in the twentieth line, “melts”, that suggests narrative: the direction of time constantly in motion, much like the “river” of line fifteen that embodies the ekphrastic moment; long enough for the poet and the painter, the “us” of the poem, to remain in “love”.

As the evidence for an Australian performance of ekphrasis through the lens of *methexis*, Jones’ poem embodies this sense of “a pattern danced into the ground”. Jones’ process, sitting before *Life Burst* on a computer chair shifting over and gliding along the surface of the artwork (pers. comm.), is inserted diachronically through her interrogation of the painting: “Can we look at what is over here, or there?” (For the full text of this poem, see Appendix One; 212). Regarding “questions” that are “overwritten”, in responding to an existing artefact the poet is asked to engage with the artwork, such that their lived experience—the process of finding an original way to address these questions through affect and interpretation—becomes the content of the poem.

Maintaining discernible links to the painter’s artefact against the drive toward originality in her own is one of the “parallels that don’t hold forever”. Jones’ lexicon is replete with

concepts of origin, including “sperm”, “womb”, “blue birth passage”, and “DNA” that suggest this desire to create originally. Comparing Bolt’s example of “trekking paths others had trekked before”, with Jones’ line “Trails mix trails evolving a dark script” arrives at the apotheosis of the performance of ekphrasis in Australia: a direct engagement with a work of art that demonstrates a *methetik* trace; a walking-along-*with* the painting.

This is possible by conceiving of the ekphrastic poem as an artefact: as the lived experience of the artwork, relayed through the process of the poet in the *personal* Event. Considering Jones’ poem as part of PPW, it is indebted to the *public* Event curated by Slade and Minter, in that it provided a platform for her work to perform due to the spatiotemporal conditions afforded by the exhibition’s mode of dissemination. This allows us to glimpse the performance of an ekphrasis beyond description and, by using the site-specific nature of the exhibition as a test case, project what is possible for ekphrasis in an Australian context when conceptualised in this way as an abstract ekphrasis.

In discussing how my own ekphrastic work has benefitted from studying this exhibition, the poems contained in this chapter, “Walking-Along-*With*”, are examples of how a poet approaching a painting directly can adopt this role of the “capable respondent”. Making the decision early in my compositional process to include pictures of the works to which I am responding meant that this section of creative work would to operate under similar conditions to the PPW exhibition. That the reader/viewer is able to see the work of art first means that the poem and the painting are always to be considered at the “same level”. The theory of “conceptual blending” from Karen Sullivan’s work on ekphrasis suggests that when a poem and an artwork are displayed side by side, they become simultaneous “language inputs” (526). Read as two corresponding texts, the concepts of each are applied

to the other in the mind of the reader/viewer, such that the reader/viewer's perspective becomes a blend of the original work of art with the poet's initial experience as a reader/viewer (Sullivan 528). By displaying the work of art simultaneously with the poem—as was done in PPW and at the “Paradise” exhibition at the Centre for Creative Photography in Adelaide in 2017—the reader/viewer's experience is enhanced in this third, blended moment of interpretation that involves a “compression of time and space” (Sullivan 529). The display of the works of art in this section is a link to the conditions of PPW, but equally an invitation for the reader to engage in the same interpretive process that the poet has entered into. This presentation enacts the metaphoric equivalence of the artwork and the ekphrastic poem.

Likewise, whilst not bound to a deadline or a commission my process initially was similar to the poets in PPW as I was attracted to the surfaces of the paintings and began by noting down my affect responses. I found the works of art that I felt compelled to revisit through the drafting process were ones that increased in interest once I began researching them. Often this investigation began by reading the plaque beside the painting as it was displayed in a gallery. Whilst many of the poems in this section are not written in response to non-representational works of art, in a similar way to Ashbery's non-descriptive treatment of Parmigianino's portrait in “Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror” I gravitated toward artworks where there was an aspect—materially or intentionally—that suggested something beyond mimetic representation. In this way the creative impulse was at the fore of my interpretive process.

As a number of poems in PPW evidence, contemporary ekphrasis is indebted to the abstractionist trait of self-reflexivity. Meta-poetically, the research into performance based

ekphrasis is written into my own poetry as a reflection of my methodology, but also as a way of subtly announcing these poems as ekphrastic from the outset. From the “permission to react” given in “Pandaemonium”, the poet is only able to “fumble darkly / around” through the early phases of this sequence of poems (1: 36). The questions that begin “A Shape of Thought after Mikala Dwyer” and the argument that follows in the poem extend this investigation into the creative-interpretive process in the space of an artwork, especially one as conceptual as Dwyer’s (1: 49-50). Reflexivity is a way of drawing attention to the speaker as an interpretive actor by highlighting the personal aspect of their approach to an existing object (Butler 73). By maintaining a meta-poetic narration of the ekphrastic process in the response to the works of art, I am foregrounding the lyric ‘I’ in these poems.

The ‘I’ functions in a similar way to the all-consuming lyric ‘I’ that Marjorie Perloff identifies in the work of Frank O’Hara. Perloff suggests that “Whilst the poet’s self remains a constant center [sic], anything or anyone that comes within its field or vision can be addressed or called by name” (122). This allows the ‘I’ to shift from poem to poem as a magnet for different details contained in the artwork. Where the speaker of “A Shape of Thought after Mikala Dwyer” walks through the gallery narrating their assumptions of the artist’s intentions, “Self Portrait, the Executioner” requires the poet to shift into the same reflective mode as the painter; imagining themselves similarly “heroic” and “inspired” by the same “bad news” as the work’s creator Ben Quilty (1: 46). My research revealed that this portrait was painted on the day of Myuran Sukumaran’s execution and the thick impasto of the canvas highlights the raw immediacy of the artist’s emotion in grieving for his friend (“Self Portrait, the Executioner” 45). The balance of *seeing* and *reading* identified in PPW’s direct ekphrastic poems informs both the tone and the imagery of this poem in order to convey these same emotions.

As exemplified in “And the Bridegroom after Lucien Freud” there is an attempt to “surpass the limits” of the canvas in these poems, by incorporating referential visual aspects in the textual features of the poem (1: 47-48). As “A Shape of Thought” is exhibited above an escalator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the shape of the poem transmits this feature of the artwork into the ekphrastic text (1: 49-50). This represents formally the process of an opinion shifting in the immediate space of the work of art during the process of contemplation. Likewise, “Apollo and the Artist” “proliferates” by evoking a similar space and openness to Cy Twombly’s canvas of the same name (1: 62-66). The delicate immediacy of Tom Roberts’ cigar-box lids exhibited in the National Gallery of Australia inform the diurnal poetics of “Ode to TOM ROBERTS” by remaining brief, with the “impression” of detail in the poem remaining the artist’s: “rendered faithfully / yours” (1: 61). Whilst these poems do not always engage with the subjects of the work of art, they do engage with the intentional stylistic approaches of the artists, such that the process of the artist is individualised in the process of the poet.

The opening stanza of “Above us the Great Grave Sky after Arthur Streeton” brings an existing work of art into the flow of time through this mode of direct abstract ekphrastic poetry. Temporally blurring “past / perfect continuous” and “the irresolute present”, the poem shifts viewpoints to remain ultimately “tenseless” (1: 52). Whilst each point of view is separated by a number, there is a sonic echo which blurs the final sounds from one stanza into the next: “again // (when” (1: 54-55); “Heidelberg // urgently” (1: 55-56). The proximity of each of these perspectives maintains the intimacy of the couple depicted in the painting, as well as the detail that Arthur Streeton has incorporated into the work. The care and attention that the artist displays in their craft is referenced in his own voice by the lines, “you

can have it / once they become / just brushstrokes / again” (1: 54). Principally, it is the materiality of the work of art that this mode of ekphrastic poem is required to reflect and reference. Whilst the temptation is to proceed emotionally through the narrative of the couple in the painting, there is a focus on the process and the intention of the painter—the *seeing* and *reading*—that is essential to create the effect of walking-along-*with*.

CHAPTER TWO

POETRY: *'Meandering'*

The Madness of the Day (Experimental Art Foundation)

Looking forward to seeing you all day
& arriving at the crowded gallery steps

I say “this gallery is full of the same people
desperate to see something different”

but I don’t really believe this I mean I am
only here to see you & like this room

is lit just to accentuate your
best features the more I look at you

the more I find myself *lost* inside a mirrored
box the kind that disappears into itself

it’s called “smoke and mirrors” I’ve played it
before a *mis-en-abyme* a play

within a play (“played”
& “playing with”) it doesn’t

make any more sense this time around
yet the writing *is* on the wall

I have to squint to read it but it’s *there*
the writing is on the ceiling too & it says

BLENDING RUBBER TRUMPETS
UNDER A CAR SEAT

during the performance piece you buy
me a beer it goes straight to my head

like black helium balloons I get high
on this darkened ellipsis...

everyone is *being* silent/polite there is
a Foley track a throbbing? my own heart?

a pulsation like the pattern of light

from a lighthouse penetrating some porthole

it turns out it's only three pedestal fans microphones
we see what we want to see I guess

"it's the bubbles" you whisper & we all clap
very loudly at exactly the right time

for the first time ever there's a line for
the bathrooms at the AEAF

the companion text says this is not a "problem"
but a "secret geometry" an inside joke

& when I come back out you are laughing with
someone it's funny you always seem to know

more people than I do regardless of
where we are together you are

looking over some featureless shoulder
kneeling beside a box of books (*as art*)

I say to whoever is listening "if galleries *are*
the new cathedrals I'm glad we've

worked out how to get people
genuflecting" & upright by the exit sign

I am overcome by the fresh paint on the walls (*not*
paintings) the sensation is new nauseating over

powering yes the crowd spills out onto the steps
for cigarettes I open my stick of gum

that says: *BEWARE THE ARTWORKS. SOME ARE*
FRAGILE & you wave to me start walking over

when Aida grabs your arm & says:
"I'm supposed to stop you running into it

see this sculpture is made of glass"

Friction (Art Gallery of South Australia)

like the scene where
Han Solo says to Luke

*I don't know if I
hate her or if I'm
falling in love with her*

then they disappear down the garbage chute

two dead horses
walk into an art gallery

they are
up against it these horses
against one another

I think of our exhausting courtship

fighting? making love?

you're always saying how knackered
you are after spending time with me

I disappear into
a room of purple glass windows
stations of the cross

walking through them
they are TOO QUIET

their purpose:
to highlight
a doomed passage?

*may the force
be with you*

& also with you we say

I see no evidence

of the weeping women
trailing him on his walk
toward death

no pain in his eyes
cast down

I find no poetry in these textiles
this art from the garden of
 repose

I want friction
abrasion
(the thorns *beneath* the rose?)

one of those
conversations
 I walk head first into
knowing I might come out
 different

like Han & Luke
down the garbage chute
walls closing in
suspense building
will they make it out?

like the dinner party
you held at your own house
that you found a way to leave

seeing these fragments
of pottery
decorative
 behind glass

it's like
 nothing happens

longing to be close enough

to be touched.

Waiting on the landing (Art Gallery of South Australia)

watching people walk up & down
the stairs of the gallery

yes
I'm worried
this conceptual thread has loosened
& now I'm all uncertain
-ties
am I draped
in that one thing worth escaping

is it me?

hesitating?
am I held in check?

a mother considers her pram
on the landing looking for the elevator

the third option is always pick up the chessboard
& go home

writing first person is *vanity* obviously
second person is *stultifying*
like you are stumbling around

a glance toward the child in the pram
to say *I don't know the layout either*

the video loops again
on the wall-mounted plasma screen

a round of applause from the children
in the activities room
(that's unrelated)

is detached contemplation ever ok?

my watch says it is now
twenty past the hour

usually I consider someone late
if it's been more than eleven minutes

a whole family walk in
looking like they have just been to the beach

sandy heels
clapping up the stairs in flip flops

the trams must be working

today's revelation

in this cloudless antechamber of art

everything is hidden in plain sight

wandering through desire
 & discomfort

this brochure covered in a warship
painted like a zebra

it's the ol' razzle dazzle

I miss

when I think of you

the long apostrophes of your gait

when walking from one piece to the next

almost ornamental

intentional
the way you tie it all together

I see a girl descend the staircase
in dungarees & birkenstocks

she has this daughter-ish quality to her
& what must be her mother
beside her

they wash past me
on their way to the cloak room

bags to collect
they will walk back out into the heat
of the day

different

I feel as though I might have got the date wrong
for meeting you

a bird dives down the long throat
of the stairwell

yes

you could say it's lost

out of place

but that would exclude
something crucial

I see it

it *is* beautiful

what does this poem say
other than I am here?

From Crown Street to Whitely Studio

songs playing in the shops
along crown street

I hear each one
a different chocolate

from an expensive box
I mix them all in my mouth

you know I'm a real glut
when you're not looking

& in the bar I feel terrific
the drink is in my head

& in my hands
simultaneously

rare confluence
this espresso martini

the afternoon spent
full of gossip

concerning our housemates
& art we detest

I drink it through a straw
developing my healthy

relationship with excess
forever evolving

I leave more than I finish
as we speak incessantly

about archetypes
the hangovers

from where we both

were born

trying to shake them
I fall up the stairs

staggering
not from the martinis but the heat

exhausted
too long with my nose

under the sun
most days at home

I could pass as a statue
betrayed

by discontinuity
in mood

contemplating
in a moment of quiet

how I fail wonderfully
my head

turned to the east
my profile in the light

of the chemist warehouse
no one sees

& I keep it

#

a song plays in the restaurant
the dancer pulls us up to dance

& we do
fumbling steps

abstracted from their origins
then shimmied back in their direction

in my notebook
I jot down

things that I like
laughing at jokes

to show
I understand them

commonly overlooked
it is by layers of removal

a good poet invents
with sleight of hand & speed

loquaciousness
seamless interludes

between each
such that the performance happens

without you

#

songs played at a party
crazy ivan down the street

& into my dreams
my red eyes

gloss shadowy figures
in thoughts of waking

behind the mask of first light
the front door slams

walking a streetscape
inside a tranströmer poem

after a death where the
day is draped in shadow

through surry hills again
after being here just yesterday

the poet as attempted
distiller of circumstance

when you are forced to spend time
with them in the poem

& to realise things
alongside them

maybe this looks
like a great bench

for tying up a shoelace
I think why still life paintings are

so unappealing to me
is that I like detail but

prefer action
enlivening

intrigue

#

song playing is some tinny jazz
swirling through the gallery

a playlist from the painter's
tiny bluetooth speakers

as he takes the workshop
around a naked woman

like *alchemy*

when the 'everyday'

becomes 'quotidian'
we witness

this transformation
immediately before us

whiteley asserts it is
realism

expressionism
& abstraction

a balance between all three
his red stamp on every page

taking the idea of
stamping one's influence on

a piece of art
non-figuratively

that is to say 'literally'
you know a market in taipei

where you can get these stamps made
I envy his shelf of

inspirational books
walls of quotes

speaking over the top of
one another &

pictures of his idols
to paint with

quite a din the mural
goes on & on

bob dylan

arthur rimbaud

& further back
where we aren't allowed

his assembled audience
rowdy & expanding

no photos allowed
this strange

ibis-like
woman

from one of his
paintings

reminds me
shut to the public

at 2pm

Wednesday Nights at Art Gallery NSW

the gallery stays open late for us
now that we're
functioning members of society
 also I guess for other people
 most people
who work (& have seemingly always done so)
 during business hours

when you asked your supervisor
about what to wear on casual fridays
during your internship
he said *we aren't paying you*
 wear whatever you want
 —wear nothing at all
 if you'd prefer

which is an odd token
to take into a gallery
filled with so much empty symbolism

I'm bound to end up asking
dumb questions of our guide
or start disagreeing

at the supermarket
last week a man yelling
prices are high!
pants are down!
 caught our attention
 contra this art
 which hasn't yet

that's worth exploring
 —how a bad attitude
taken into a gallery
 can be as derisive
as an art attitude
 taken into the big bad world

I could talk about these sculptures

down here

on the basement level

as if it were a storage shed
hoarding the detritus of an experience with art

the remainder these
objects that reject categorisation

they hardly inspire reaction on my behalf

production
doomed
to be forgotten

there's this printer that
shoots out sheets of coloured paper
at random
that I quite like

maybe *like* is not the right word
or even *enjoy*

I appreciate

but then again I don't stay
a particularly long time in front of it

it keeps you there
by being
unpredictable

even the guards get a kick from it
you can tell by their grins

art made with
human annoyances

propensities
for unreliability

I think of making a list of
friends of mine who are artists

people characterised by their
lateness
frequently double
booking themselves
leaving their phones
at home
wearing mismatched
outfits

we don't rely on art for anything
otherwise it would be architecture
or furniture

here's an exposed thought
that I can't seem to move

perhaps it's art
that makes us human

I think seriously about little else

Salon De Refusés (S H Ervin Gallery, Sydney)

'an evening as real as paint on canvas.'

—James Schuyler

in the afternoon
& before the curtain is drawn
 behind us
you've already charmed the ticket lady
 into giving us student rates
 charmed I'm sure

you
 with art-talk
 sharp eyes
 a winning smile

me supporting with clumsiness
a sort of Hugh Grant-esque
 mumbling something
 about my thesis

as a recovery
 I turn around
 on myself
gracelessly
 (that is
 with the exclusion
 of grace)

in to a room filled with
 failures

wall-to-wall failures
 like a trophy cabinet
for under-achievement tho better lit

 even abstractions
 (like this one here)
have shadows

I think it interesting how the abstract

can be considered landscape
enough to enter in the Wynne Prize

live impressions
as if *in* the water
as if *in* the sky
not on the ground
in the S H Ervin Gallery
where under this sterile light
it appears dazzlingly obscure

I watch you
a painter yourself
walk right past it

onto something
more figurative
more literal
(*more you*)

this might be as close as I get
to abstract expressionism
—as close as anyone in Australia
gets to Ab Ex
(painters included)—

so I hang around
& think for a minute about my favourite paintings by
Twombly
Rauschenberg

painters who concealed something &
had something
interesting to conceal in their work

beautiful obfuscation

Laurie Duggan's poem about
Rauschenberg says
erasure makes memory
greater than the thing itself

but is this masochistic?
fantasising like
 close your eyes & think of Ab Ex

I carry them with me tho
 felt
 not present
memory the true abstraction
 of feeling

I see the first celebrity I recognise
it's Costa from the telly
admittedly he's a bit C-grade
tho he might hold a broad appeal
 ABC the public broadcaster
 Gardening Australia etc

the beard & long hair that make him
instantly recognisable as someone “known”

 a minor celebrity

John Forbes knew about poets being major
he wrote:
 it's important to be major
 but not to be too cute about it

(as an addendum
I think it pays at least to be at least
'interesting' looking
 if you can't be major
 —& Costa is surely
 the lodestar for this way of thinking)

 still it's probably better
 to paint real celebrities
like the show *Painting with Anh Do*
(a neat piece of network cross-promotion here
 for the ABC)

 what's that show called?

A Brush with Fame probably

the painter has called this *Costa in Honey*
but I misread it

Costa as Honey
& am slightly disappointed
the painting is less surreal than
my adapted title suggests or desires

he has flowers on his shirt
a fine decoration
but not even the bees in the
painting seem convinced they're real
(this is a sad reflection on realism)

I've always found surrealism
to be a bit of an empty cult

except for that genius film by Buñuel
The Exterminating Angel

like the Hotel California
“you can check out anytime you like
but you can't never leave”

I too hesitate
to cross the threshold

to that way of thinking
as if art simply meant dredging
one's subconscious
then admiring the transcendence of it later

tho I prefer it to a painting
that goes to great pains to make things
exactly as they appear
—your paintings

the only time
I've ever taken mushrooms
was at a dinner party
while Morgan
was putting the finishing touches on

a crème brûlée

she came out to the patio to find
all the mushrooms had been taken

—the lesson being

too much detail
& you miss
the experience

then you wonder why Jimmy is
making snow angels in the
dead grass—

I don't tell you any of this
(you have to know Jimmy
to really get it)

I reach you beside
this next painting
you look tall beside it

the shape of the canvas
has a thinning
effect on you
like a fun house mirror
this sort of gaunt
Modigliani thing
(which maybe means
I'm hungry?)

it is bigger than I am
so initially I have respect for it
in a very
evolutionary sense
(like I would for a bear)

but as soon as
I start intellectualising it
like the Cro-Magnon
un-hunching

it manifests

an evolution of beige

that foreseeably
you are impressed by

the figure
in the portrait
a fashionable selection
of acute angles
trenchant cheekbones
& a magazine gloss

disturbingly hyper-realistic
as if photoshopped but painted
applying paint the
way one might
foundation or concealer

tho this is nothing new in portraiture

how a court painter might have painted
a fat king skinny careful
to make it look like they were never there

tho paradoxically
every marking brushstroke
makes it harder
for the painter to disappear completely

a painter in this age
entering this competition must
surely want to be conspicuous

but at this pace it's all a blur
as we round the corner

a chin
a velvet chair
a gauche grey background
a vermillion glove

floating above it

we stop in front of another
cashing-in-on-pop-culture portrait
the director of *Lion*

shirt: white

suit: black

background: dark

dressed

as if already on his way
to the Archibald award night
alas

then this other
equally presumptive portrait
of Ben Quilty
titled simply *Ben*

—oh yes!

what else could shore up
a spot in the Archibald
so well?

your sneer suggests
you & I both
like the irony
of this failed attempt

a Quilty conspiracy you say

nice try!

not like a party
where the painter could say
at the door

“I’m a friend of *Ben’s*

—oh sorry
that’s actually Ben *Quilty*

I just call him *Ben*

—yeah

we're pretty close"

not close enough

what other delightful failures
does this room hold?

you say to the
direction of where I'm standing

*this canvas
would be about \$200
this paint almost \$300
the frame is awful tho
he must have thought that
it was gonna get dropped*

an insurance frame

"anticipation of future loss"
—my adopted definition of melancholy

how this painter has got
their sitter sitting
enacts this

melancholic
ill-humoured
enervated
turned a little to the side

so classically serious
of course
you like this one
you're almost touching it
with your very straight nose

you do touch it
with your finger

you report
the paint is very rough

& panicked
I look around for
where the security cameras are
in case anyone has seen you

yet so aware
& comfortable
in his own facial expressions

the patient sitter in this portrait
is the actor
Colin Friels

(is the ABC sponsoring this
I wonder?)

I sense that he is acting
in the portrait
the creases of the shirt
cast as a pensive brow

this too fits
my preference for art as performance

knowing that there is some theatre
lurking in the wings

behind this very detailed work
some drama

I'm quite happy playing the
why-wasn't-this-painting-selected game
it's very pleasurable criticism

treating paintings as
guilty until proven innocent

assuming incompetence

you are in fact
standing in front of my favourite piece

in the whole exhibition
& when you move I see it

its title first

*i got home from work
and sat on the toilet scrolling
then remembered i needed to paint
a self portrait for the Archibald
so i took a selfie
and continued to scroll.*

(self portrait)

I don't ask you
but I wonder
does this *DO*
anything for you?

I love it

the careful thoughtlessness
of it & its execution

the small 'i's used in the title
completely apposite
to the size & scope of the canvas

its very human scale
the smudged face
of the artist

the way all my favourite poems
& paintings are
'untitled' (as one mustn't risk sounding absolute)

poetic & diaristic
something that reminds me of
James Schuyler
titling poems 'today'

allowing for detours

like any good journey

moving

giving disproportionate thought to
otherwise unmemorable things as
you pass them

instead this painting by the door

is filled with a shelf of books

I pause to look at their titles
there is a lingering echo
of a Vermeer about this

the overly conscious

array of objects

to imply status —yes

totally your style

the portraits of rich white folk

your friends & their

‘three favourite objects’ you ask them
to pose with

it’s funny

I find it hard to imagine you

paintbrush in hand

standing back

thinking *this must mean something*

yet any meaning you might seek

will ultimately be subordinate to some
decorative

formal logic

seeing it

these words

laden with symbolism

reference

in such plain view

I refuse to acknowledge them

by subverting the image's primacy
with a more literal 'reading' of the portrait

I mean
there's you
standing there
your propensity for
agonising verisimilitude

accuracy

I am
waiting by the door
for you to be done looking at this one

I'm pretty sure it's Baudelaire who says
criticism is an extension of the
creative process

but maybe not

I'm fast &
you have to keep up.

MAXXI (Contemporary Art Museum, Rome)

Momentbild: a fleeting image, temporary view, often used in reference to photography. From German: *moment* 'instantaneous' + *bild* 'artwork or image'

construction site
a suspension of language
this building
of an afternoon
now in the bright air

white space
between apologies
to the Etruscan sandstone
from the concrete blocks
keeping us apart

a dream you do not become
conscious of dreaming in
a building in two languages
full of bi-lingual prose
the same thing
as appropriating
awkward lines
& desires lost to history
a museum of contemporary art

taking a step away from
this moment together
to gather myself
to get another
great photograph of you
sun in your hair
drinking sparkling water
on a white park bench

the way Zaha Hadid
would have wanted
this building of a moment
extracted from the present
& in two languages
enlivened

the white space
architecture as haute couture

not the stuff of the everyday
but of fantasy

—MAXXI Museum, Roma, 6/10/17

**ESSAY: A Meandering Line: The Effect of Indeterminacy in a
Gallery Ekphrasis.**

Paul Hetherington writes in “Main Corridor” from his 2016 collection *Gallery of Antique Art*, that “The meandering feeling in these corridors suggests there are too many depictions of the ideal” (11). Contemporary poets writing an ekphrastic poem demonstrate a well-founded scepticism of this “ideal” present in the tradition of imagistic representation and poetic description. The descriptive ekphrastic mode is unsuitable for the charged subjective experience of meandering through a gallery. A shift from the phenomenological encounter with an artwork as a single object in isolation, to an exhibition or gallery experience means the poet has a series or sequence of images curated in a specific, public space to respond to rather than a specific artist or image. For Ken Bolton in his ekphrastic poem “Dark Heart”, this generates, “an atmosphere / not a backdrop” (n.p). Privileging the lived experience of the poet in the gallery space, I will investigate the function of meandering as a productive metaphor for the abstract ekphrastic encounter, manifest in two different uses of poetic line in the prose poetry of Hetherington and “streamed collage” of Bolton (Brown n.p).

Whilst not specifically directed toward one painting to the exclusion of others, by being present in the physical space of the gallery and creating a poem that traces this meandering through the space of artworks, the gallery-ekphrasis enacts both the creative and interpretive conditions of ekphrasis that are outlined in my introduction. Having a lived experience of the artwork, the poet brings the artwork out of the timeless contemplative sphere and into the present moment of the poem’s performance. Building on the performance-based definition of the abstract ekphrastic poem developed in the first chapter that proceeded to engage directly with a single work of art, I will here offer a revised definition that accounts for a more open ekphrasis to be explored in this chapter. An *indirect* abstract ekphrasis involves a creative and interpretive drive experienced by the poet, lived in the presence of an artwork *or* multiple artworks, where the experience is neither predetermined, nor outcome based, but instead a

“meandering”. In this meandering, the failure to comprehensively account for the artwork is performed through the lineation of the poem as the poem creates itself as its own object.

To examine the significance of meandering in critical theory, Slavoj Žižek proposes a dynamic between the Subject and the Other where the projection of a Drive onto the non-speaking Subject ultimately sublimates the Subject into the Object-Cause of Desire (qtd. in Wright & Wright 155). In a direct analogy of the ekphrastic encounter, the creative-interpretive drive experienced by the poet is projected onto the artworks that are not in a position to respond, given that, by experiencing art in a gallery or exhibition setting, the focus of their Drive is impeded through the dispersal of attention across many artworks and real-world distractions. The artwork considered in this gallery context becomes both the object of desire and the cause of desire (Lacan’s *objet petit a*) because it is not able to be translated in an absolute sense through the poem. The complexity of this sublimated desire means that the *objet petit a* is always out of reach. However, Žižek attests:

the space of desire is bent like space in the theory of relativity; the only way to reach the object ... is indirectly, in a devious meandering way—proceeding straight on ensures that we miss the target. This is what Lacan has in mind when apropos of courtly love, he evokes ‘the meaning we must attribute to the negotiation of the *detour* in the psychic economy’. (qtd. in Wright & Wright 155)

Whereas the straight lines of non-poetic prose may evince the rational ordering of proceeding “straight on”, instead the “meandering” poetic line is essential to the creation of the gallery-ekphrastic poem, as the object-cause of desire becomes in Aaron Schuster’s terms, “the motor for displacement and drift” (60). The line is a performance and becomes a site for *detours*: a

presentation that considered as an act in-time reflects a chronicle of indeterminate meanderings. As Jan Jagodzinski writes:

The paradox is that the process of *searching itself* produces the object that causes (frames) the search, but this happens retroactively, in an exact parallel to Lacan's understanding of desire, which produces its own object cause. (27; emphasis added)

Therefore, it is the "searching itself" that the poet brings into the process of the poem's composition "through the operations of language, where desire both *produces* its object and is *produced by it*" (Wright & Wright 3; emphasis added). Extending Barbara Bolt's definition of performance, as that which "produces rather than represents reality" ("Art Beyond" 136), the lines of the poem become the evidence and final resting place for these temporal "operations of language". The poem emerges as the performed expression of the poet's lived experience attempting to write an ekphrasis in the space of particular works of art.

As the poet leaves the gallery, or rather, as the poem is completed, there is a sense that this original desire has been in some way satiated. Yet, examining the concept of completion in this form of poetry it is pertinent to further interrogate the time of the poem and how it is fundamentally and irrevocably at odds with the time of the gallery. As William Corbett notes about the poetry of James Schuyler, the reader is left feeling as though "something is over, but not finished" (n.p). In psychoanalytic terms, the Drive continues without the poet (echoing Schuster's description of the partial Drives as "the organs without bodies" (143-144)) in the same way artworks maintain their material existence in the seemingly timeless space of the gallery. These excesses are left behind by the poet as their poem is "over", but the incompleteness of the poet's endeavour, their failure to fully possess the object-cause of

their desire, means that the poem is never “finished”. The poet writing a gallery-ekphrasis experiences the gallery in the flow of time and brings the still artworks into the present through language expressed by the lineation of the poem: the line becoming, in effect, a time-stamp of the poet’s experience of the gallery. The poetic line’s capacity to present this failure as an experience is the essential expression of the poet’s *jouissance*. Žižek defines *jouissance* as an “excess of enjoyment as the goal-in-itself” that suggests the poet is freed by the inability to complete the task of representation to a purposeful end (“Organs Without Bodies” 143). Essentially, it is this lack of closure—this failure to be direct, descriptive or representational—that opens up the space for the poetic line to be evidence of the process of the “searching itself”.

There are three main instances in the gallery-ekphrasis of *Gallery of Antique Art* and “Dark Heart” where the poet’s *personal* Event, the simultaneous act of interpretation-composition, disturbs the stilled time of the artwork. Firstly, this occurs when the real world interrupts the imagined world of the artwork and is evoked through sonic imagery. Secondly, it occurs when the flow of time in the poet’s experience is broken by a stationary meditation on the immobility of the artwork, such as an apostrophe or returned focus to the work of performing the ekphrastic poem. Thirdly, it occurs when the poet exercises their evaluative agency and through some critical stance offers resistance against the artworks’ illusory properties.

To examine the first of these disturbances and to approach the gallery-ekphrasis sonically, “Ekphrasis and Representation” recalls the term *prosopopoeia* as “the rhetorical technique of envoicing [sic] a silent object” (Heffernan 302). In this tradition, Hetherington writes of the “unspeakable utterance” in “Pietà” (8) such that the content of what is said by the figure represented in the work of art remains within the poet’s own hermetic loop of constructed

inaccessibility. Hetherington is writing about a statue that lacks the capacity for verbal speech, but further to this point is that his work of ekphrasis is notional: a creation of the poet's own imagination or a reconstruction from memory. This double-muteness, through the reader's assumption of the referential object's mute-physicality and the poet's own partial disclosure of an imaginary (or rather "incomplete") object within the poem, is an essential factor in foregrounding the poet's own exercise in indeterminacy. As to give voice to the silent object of Pietà would require an act of absolute interpretation on the behalf of the poet, Hetherington's poem shows that it is doubly impossible to translate what it is the artwork might be trying to say adequately in the poem; preferencing experience over *prosopopoeia*.

Addressing the poetic line and how this may be instrumental to account for such indeterminacy, Hetherington suggests that the prose poem format provides a unique frame; with the shape of the poem considered as a "room". The following definition from his collaboration with Cassandra Atherton, "Rooms and Spaces: The Still Movement of Prose Poetry", notes:

(2) ways in which new prose poems about rooms and spaces by the project collaborators may exemplify how prose poetry may act as either, or both:

(2.1) contained and restrictive 'rooms' that enable significant effects of poetic imagery and condensation

(2.2) 'open' spaces that enable significant effects of poetic indeterminacy and a ramifying suggestiveness. (269)

Certainly the "unspeakable utterance" contained within Pietà's solid, marble form can be read in the sense of room as defined in 2.1. However, it is the way that Hetherington passes from

one “room” to another (one prose poem to another) within his created “gallery” (sequence of poems) that utilises the prose poem form to “open” the poem out to “enable” indeterminacy as alluded to in “(2.2)”. Walking through the many different rooms, including breaks for “Interlude and Reflection” within the created space of *Gallery of Antique Art*, Hetherington’s speaking subject is similarly “open”.

Fittingly, it is during one such meandering that a painting does speak. In “Ninth Room (Perambulation)”, the sequence is as follows:

I’m standing quietly and a painting speaks—of how
there were floods for nearly a week and not far from
here the Tiber rose. But, after all, a tour’s arrived and
a guide’s instructing her group: ‘It’s neat how he’s
painted her feet.’ (26)

This comic interruption, the rupture of the contemplative moment where the poet is engaged in listening to the artwork, reiterates the importance of *detours* in the gallery-ekphrastic poem. It is the failure of this well-intended attempt at contemplation that highlights the gap between the “ideal” and the unexpected.

Hetherington’s excursion into the diurnal is what Thomas Shapcott describes as the “immediacy” of the prose-poetic form that is captured in the “present tense” of the writing style (n.p). Hetherington writes in a manner that Shapcott describes as “reporting live”: “I am doing this, this is happening to me” (Shapcott n.p). By contrasting the diegetic sound of the tour guide with the imagined sound of the subject in the painting speaking, the gallery-

ekphrasis-as-prose-poem captures the process of its own production. Shapcott's conditions could equally be applied to the process poem which embodies a poetics of immediacy and indeterminacy, such as Fred Moramarco sketches in his essay "John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara: The Painterly Poets". Moramarco writes that "Art has always been occupied with the universal, these artists seem to be telling us, but life continues to serve up a steady diet of particulars" (444). As a feature of O'Hara's self-diagnosed "I do this, I do that poems" (noting the remarkable similarity between O'Hara's terminology and Shapcott's), it is the equal attention given to the images presented in the poem that allows the noumenal and the phenomenal to exist side by side with the speaker of the poem as the "constant center [sic]" (Perloff "Poet Amongst Painters" 122). It is worth highlighting how the intrusion of the physical world into the mental world of the poem's composition can be viewed in "Dark Heart". By allowing for *detours*, Bolton's poem is theoretically akin to Hetherington, but stylistically distinct.

Whilst *Gallery of Antique Art* produces a map of the gallery through its narrated meanderings, "Dark Heart" provides a map of the mind. The shape of "Dark Heart", like the progression of thought, is not straightforward and the lineation of the poem is a reflection of this. As David Dick notes, Bolton's "characteristically fractured step lines", have the effect of generating a sensation of lived indeterminacy (n.p). The precedent for this is in the all-over poetry of O'Hara, that as an appropriation of the abstract expressionists' attempt to convey pure (non-representational) emotional experience, the poem becomes the "experience of an experience" through its arrangement (Silverberg 102).

Bolton's ekphrasis is a reluctant one, as quantitatively, on the surface "Dark Heart" appears to be much more focused on whistling than it is about the 2014 Art Gallery of South

Australia Biennial, from which the poem takes its name. Importantly, it is about the corporeal effect that whistling has on the poet, rather than the sounds of the songs themselves:

‘You’re
My Thrill’. Then
‘Couldn’t It Be You’ —
I wonder what
the connection is —
the key, the pattern,
somehow relates?
Its
calming effect
when I whistle it. (n.p)

The poem’s attempt to comprehend the links between “You’re My Thrill” and “Couldn’t It Be You” are of more importance to the poet than “the art at hand”. The connection supposedly is the “calming effect” generated whilst whistling it. By *performing* the songs, rather than simply listening to them or describing them, this experience is a way of taking ownership of the melodies in a form of the creative-interpretive drive that is resistant to the inaccessibility of the original referent (the songs themselves, but equally, the Biennial). Vital to understanding his gallery experience is how his step lines perform this meandering of mind. The poem develops like a sonic motif in a musical composition; returning to and revising the same themes throughout.

Like the whistled theme that recurs as a tic, Bolton's speaker is constantly returning to the task of writing about the exhibition: "What / to do about this / art?", "So / resignation, 'getting on with things'", and "This / art then, / what to do about it?" (n.p). This not only highlights his distraction, but serves to register his critical displeasure with the exhibition. Whilst admitting that his stated purpose is to write a review about the exhibition, he is quick to digress, confessing, "I would rather / write something else" (n.p). He expresses a resistance to the exhibition and what is contained within in it:

I whistle
bop a bit
try not to think
of the
vast tide of crap
the exhibition represents. (n.p)

And yet, his attention is ultimately focused, not on the exhibition, but on the act of interpretation that becomes the poem itself (recalling Jagodzinski's stress on the "searching itself"). Schuster in *The Trouble with Pleasure* describes tics as ways of "draining the overflow of emotional excitement caused by thinking itself, an excess of energy that, if pent up, would impede the flow of ideas and disrupt the concentration" (120).

As evidence of the poem's concentration, the lines are broken meticulously in "Dark Heart". Enjambment is able to effect what Allen Ginsberg called a "mind breath" in the way that William Carlos Williams' triadic line poems echo the intonational function of speech (qtd. in Gerber 179). Consider how the "getting back to it" motif is broken here: "This / art then, /

what to do about it?” A solitary determiner, “This”, should situate the reader in the immediate physical space of the poet’s experience, yet this is undercut by its lineation: the word’s function is destabilised due to its isolated appearance on the page. The line break that follows “This”, suggests a hesitation to return to the task of interpretation symbolised by the task of writing. Still, contrast this with the resolving line when the conceit of the poem rushes its apotheosis: “But then / I am whistling the wrong tune” (n.p). At six words, this second line is uncharacteristically long for the poem, but it accentuates the poet’s self-satisfaction in marrying the sonic preoccupation of whistling as a tic with the idiomatic registering of a different opinion.

The variety and unpredictability of Bolton’s line creates a tension about where the stress will fall and whether or not the phrase he has begun will resolve. This lack of resolution creates an indeterminacy akin to Corbett’s feeling like “something is over, but not finished” in the poetry of Schuyler. As Bolton’s motifs build through repetition, they create anxiety about reaching a conclusion. Only at the end of the poem is the poet able to reflect on what he has produced, realising that it was the (willingly) failed process of attempting to possess and translate the artwork contained in the exhibition that ultimately has produced the poem:

Today I worried happily,
wrote stuff, ‘asseverated’,
was alive. (n.p)

The anxiety that the poetic line creates is not unique to the stepped lines of Bolton, as Hetherington and Atherton attest in “‘Unconscionable Mystification’?: Rooms, Spaces and the Prose Poem”, the prose poem, “...looks like prose on the page – a seemingly innocuous

paragraph – but the *anxiety* comes from realising it is something else” (274). Certainly, Bolton’s poetry does contain, “immediate expression in the service of capturing the unsteady, distracted and forgetful mind as it thinks on its own movements, various subjects and the self-aware creation of the poem” (Dick n.p). By meandering both poets create a feeling of nervous energy that is captured by the shape of their poem in two distinct and seemingly incompatible ways.

Like the “dark smudged stain” across the sky in Bolton’s poem, the prose poetry of Hetherington is tinted by Murray Krieger’s theory of ekphrasis as “still movement”, “where the temporal flow of narrative is frozen in an effort to ape the materiality of the spatial arts” (Bolton n.p; qtd. in Scott 216). Certainly, the prose poem appears most apposite to this logic as its rectangular shape evokes the spatial limit of a framed canvas, or the seal of a room’s fixed architecture. Both the art-object metaphor and the architectural metaphor are apt for *Gallery of Antique Art*, as this statement from “Unconscionable Mystification(?)” suggests:

Indeed, the poem’s rectangular shape on the page is reminiscent – as are so many prose poems – of looking from above at a room’s plan and being given access to part of that room’s resonant multiplicities – particularly those that involve personal histories and activities. (271)

My reading of the “freeze” in Krieger follows James Heffernan’s, in that any poem that seeks to break this representational-descriptive tradition must be excluded from Krieger’s definition that “treats ekphrasis as a way of freezing time in space” (301). As Heffernan contends, the temporal import of language is naturally resistant to the stasis of an art-object (301).

Although the prose poem has the spatial qualities of a “still” object and could be considered

Kriegerian in a material sense, Hetherington's process qua production, brings the artworks through his own compositional narrative into the present moment of his poem. The prose poem's compression of space captures the "room's resonant multiplicities" where "personal histories and activities" are performed.

Visually, it would appear that Bolton's line is incompatible with Krieger's spatial metaphor as it sprawls across the page, rather than remaining in the condensed rectangular shape of a prose-poem. Yet, consider what Pam Brown says of Bolton's line:

Ken lets his poems follow their own direction, many roaming across the pages as a kind of streamed collage takes shape, making them into exceptional visual works amply surrounded by white space. (n.p)

Despite the stylistic contrast between Bolton and Hetherington, the experience of movement captured and performed on the page can be applied to both poets' gallery-ekphrastic poems. It is the visual property of Bolton's lines arranged in their own unique way that allows "Dark Heart" to create itself as an "exceptional visual work" in its own right, just as Hetherington's compressed concrete shapes are similarly original objects that capture a poet's meandering and sustain an openness to indeterminacy.

By creating the gallery-ekphrastic poem as a new object the poets highlight their independence from the space of the gallery—a space that they are able to walk out of—by generating the poem as the site for the performance of their evaluative agency. Early in *Gallery of Antique Art*, Hetherington asserts his autonomy, writing, "...we can choose not to believe it", and then, returning to this line of thinking, "We can decide to accept beauty close

to where we stand. Exhausted we're ready to step into dirty streets and redolent decay" (4).

Similarly, Bolton's resistance to the exhibition and its intended effects are emphasised in

"Dark Heart" as the "vast tides of crap this exhibition represents" to the poet (n.p).

Whilst Hetherington writes "there is never enough time to understand the art", for both poets, it is the unfeasibility of the task of absolute interpretation that fuels their creative-interpretive drive (42). That their time (the time of the poem) is the time of the meandering "searching itself", the performance of this failure ultimately becomes the originally creative-interpretive object of the gallery-ekphrastic poem. The poem remains potently and assertively indeterminate in light of the incommensurable gap between the timeless properties of the gallery's contents and the poet's experience, as the line performs this meandering through the gallery in the poem itself.

My own creative practice has allowed me to examine the limits of this meandering poetics, as a way of trying to determine and subsequently revise the ekphrastic nature of the indirect reference to works of art considered in this chapter. The question of the personal that is paramount to this thesis enhances the creative impulse and relaxes the interpretive impulse in this ekphrastic mode by accepting the failure of absolute comprehension. Rather than trying to assume or investigate what the artist may have intended, these poems instead create the poem as their own object. As a result, the critical voice in these poems is far more prominent. To develop and interrogate these critical positions as they unfold in-time creates poetry that is personally engaged in the space of art. This naturally follows Bolton's example and finds its expression in the long poems "From Crown Street to Whitely Studio" and "Salon Des Refusés", but these poems came much later in my process of Practice as Research.

Before identifying the framework for gallery-ekphrasis I had written “The Madness of the Day”. This poem presents the search to resolve the dissonance between the speaking subject and the object of their desire. Here, the failed interpretive attempt is mirrored in the failed romantic attempt. The gap between the real and the ideal is highlighted through allusions to the disappointment of the “paint on the walls (*not / paintings*)” (2: 93). The “sculpture...made of glass”, as a play on the “window” effect of Ernst Gombrich’s illusory reading of art practice, demonstrates the limitations imposed upon the speaking subject’s search and establishes the anxious experience of the poet in this mode (2: 93). The lines are paired to impose proximity between the interpretive/romantic couples. “Friction” posits another way of resolving this critical failure by emphasising intimacy and proximity (2: 94-95). Whilst the mood in this early form of the gallery-ekphrastic poem may have conveyed frustration it was always desperately engaged with details and associations. Conducted intimately within the space of artworks these earlier poems suggested another creatively fruitful modification of the personal ekphrastic encounter. As the third poem in this suite, “Waiting on the Landing” posits that attention within the walls of a gallery can be enough to save a poem from wandering so far as to be outside the scope of ekphrasis: although the process may be frustrating, the poet does not leave. Its final line expresses this exasperation in a moment of self-reflection: “what does this poem say / other than I am here?” (2: 98). Thoughts prompted by art recounted in the performance of that experience are still ekphrastic because the poet, in spite of their doomed exercise, rallies with critical panache. This heightens the significance on the craft of the poem—its unique shape, its unique voice, its speed and its meta-poetic preoccupation—returning to its own composition like one of Bolton’s tics.

In the spirit of abstract expressionist painting performed through Bolton's reading of it, there is a preponderance for stylistic invention in the "streamed collage" of "Waiting on the Landing", "Wednesday Nights" and "Salon Des Refusés". Formally, William Baziotes' concept of the mirror-canvas is a useful metaphor to understand the lineation in the creative work contained in Chapter Two. Like the work of Baziotes and his fellow abstract expressionists, the line is a record of the poet's consciousness, with the presentation of the scattered dispersal of attention within the gallery space reflecting the poet's thoughts in the moment of contemplation. Whilst this may seem inconsistent with the tight couplets of "From Crown Street to Whiteley Studio" and "The Madness of the Day", both interpretations of subject-mirroring lineation (in the collage and the couplet forms) rely on the visual features of the poem to represent a snapshot of a subject in time. The statue passage in "Crown Street" is a nod to this tension that is almost overlooked by the fixity and permanence of a poem once it is written down: "most days / I could pass as a statue / betrayed by discontinuity / in mood" (2: 100). Whilst referencing the pairing of the earlier poems, this mode also evokes Hetherington's "resonant multiplicities" of his fixed structure.

Combining the metaphor of equivalence from Chapter One and the concept of the mirror-canvas, it is by setting out to write a gallery-ekphrasis the poet is able to find out more about their critical stances and aesthetic preferences—to see what is left after the experience of meandering. The 'you' of "Salon Des Refusés" acts as another mirror, as the subject that reflects the aspects of artistic creation of which the speaker is critical. This antagonist stands in for a drier form of representational painting: elements of the tradition that this contemporary aesthetic approach is set against. Criticism performed at speed is an attempt to subvert the drawn-out process of criticism and to trick oneself into performing what J. S. Harry has described in Bolton's work as "a thinking against thought" (qtd. in Bolton "Sly

Mongoose” n.p). The knee-jerk form of “pleasurable criticism” performed in this poem echoes O’Hara’s poetic statement that “you just go on your nerve” (“Selected Poems” 248). The “affect responses” from the previous chapter are given free rein in the poem as the poet makes many more associative and intertextual references, uninhibited by the intention of the artist. This is an ironic attempt to engage with the surface of art-objects.

John Forbes’ use of intertext exudes its influence on “Salon” to blur the boundaries between high and low art. His poem “A Bad Day” revokes the High Modernist pretensions of T. S. Eliot’s “The Lovesong of Alfred J Prufrock”, by referring to the line “Do I dare eat a peach” . Similarly I read this peach as an allusion to the distinct and direct Imagism of “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams that begins “I have eaten / the plums / that were in / the icebox”. These references return in Forbes’ poem as:

I’m sorry
you ate the full-
coloured photo
of peaches
in our refrigerator.
Glue & paper taste horrible
& no doubt
you’ll be very sick. (53)

This ability to deflate the authenticity of existing art through appropriation is performed through the imagery of “Salon”, by sending up the well-intended portraiture contained in the exhibition. The flowers painted on the shirt of one portrait are so poorly executed, “not even

the bees in the / painting seem convinced they're real" (2: 111). Name checking Forbes and Laurie Duggan, as Bolton does frequently in his own poetry, acts as a link back to "Dark Heart" and Bolton's gallery-ekphrasis; an approach equally disposed to deflate the self-importance of the artwork, by "treating paintings as / guilty until proven innocent" (2: 116). Irony for these poets, and in this mode of writing, is considered as evidence of engagement.

The critical aspect of the poems in Chapter Two required a lot of time and energy to ascertain where ekphrastic links in the poetry were being maintained. "The Madness of the Day" was rejected by a local art magazine in an email that suggested the poem was not *about* art and was therefore unsuitable for publication (pers. comm.). As "From Crown Street" begins at a pub in Newtown, it could be argued that the poem is not gallery-ekphrastic, so far does it extend beyond the physical space of the gallery. As alluded to in a passage from "Wednesday Night", this blurring of the boundaries in gallery-ekphrasis examines:

—how a bad attitude
taken into a gallery
can be as derisive
as an art attitude
taken into the big bad world. (2: 118)

When these poems are taken outside of the gallery and approached indirectly, such that the intention of the artist is ignored, it makes the poems in Chapter Two more difficult to categorise as ekphrasis. Yet, by naming and tracing the influence of Brett Whiteley in "From Crown Street", there is an interrogation of the lived experience of the painter that makes the

poem ekphrastic in the sense of “individualising the invariant” of the painter’s process and influence. Records and books from the artist’s personal collection that are on display in the gallery, including photos of “bob dylan / arthur rimbaud”, invoke a series of intertextual allusions that stretch “further back / where we aren’t allowed” (2: 103-04). The poem is an ongoing critique of its own poetic method, offering the definition of the “poet as attempted / distiller of circumstance” (2: 102), suggesting that “a good poet invents / with sleight of hand & speed” (2: 101). Incorporating these theoretical insights against an analysis of Whiteley’s aesthetic intention, to present “expressionism / abstraction / & realism / a balance between all three” (2: 103), suggests a third mode of experimental, abstract ekphrastic writing, beyond simultaneous contemplation and beyond the space of the gallery: that by tracing the “cognitive, emotional and connotative stock” of the artist (Carroll 118), the poet may arrive at their own unique artefact that retains a link to the elemental aspects of the painter’s process. This was the genesis of the approach that is explored in Chapter Three.

By remaining in the space of works of art, the poet is able to produce a personal performance of their experience that ultimately becomes an object of its own significance, revealing associations, influences, and critical positions. As an extension of Harold Rosenberg’s comment regarding the indivisibility between “art and life” brought about by the abstract expressionists, the vital role of intimacy and engagement in Chapter Two is emphasised in the final line of “Wednesday Night”:

perhaps it’s art

that makes us human

I think seriously about little else. (2: 107)

CHAPTER THREE

POETRY: *'Footsteps' Poems to the Sea after Cy Twombly*

White Voices from the Sea
(Dramatis Personae)

Drying out in the sunlight choking up
Of course you said of course
Remembering right now in the days before
I unwound your beautiful knot
Even the sea gives out a secret voice

Running the dark street signs overheard
In verse each a slurred sonnet to orpheus
Lyrical facticity no one turns for me
Keeps singing instead of speaking
Expressing the youthful past with rancour

Ever was I obstructing your breath?
During your retreat your pictures sigh
When on my wall tracing fingers over
In the lyric shadows from the street
Nevertheless forgotten sentiments again come to life

Appearances considered as absence
Possibly I only look like I do by virtue
Of looking like no one else I have known
Even white foam forms a human space
There within the sweet breathing of the waves

HERE

in another street

only the mist is real

Roman Wall / to Twombly Canvas

cleaned to the point of eros
-ion

the white wash of the wall
renders all thought

dirty again

like gouging out an eye

graffito

from before the word was invented

heat I hardly care to
understand

running my fingers over it

searching

scratching away at

the thought
of having an itch

though your back
covered with a white sheet

is nothing like
an old vase

in an empty room

but eros

a shivering
ringing glass
that stays shivering

a phone that never stops
ringing

words piling up innumerable

posters pasted on top of one another
singing of one more sign
that I can't read

between
the hard spine of an old idea

years passing in a minute

as if announcing proudly
to passers by

I

am a layered event

in the dirt
beneath my fingernails

deep in the work
that keeps me
digging

/making

a dent in history

more pocket knife than paint trowel

carved ivory
bones carefully buried

that someone like me
might trip on one

waves

of paint crashing
around us

we scramble
in its surf

totally ignorant
of how to swim

stealing breath
from the surface

being the glue
that binds us

together

as I walk out of books

& almost into this wall

before I see the canvas

catching myself on the nick
of time.

Writing into Light (A Secret Poem)

1.

I whisper walls of light to you

the shape
when you
take a photograph

Roman streetlight staring at its feet
in the fog

I say it.

Under my breath condensing
on the window as
we go out, to eat on
la strada, it returns to us, as rain.
I tell you everything as we
walk beneath these windows

like days on a calendar
we will never live in.

2.

In conversation coming
up the stairs to our apartment;
I reach into my pockets.

Feeling for souvenirs
as if to write
is to remember
to
love poetry is
to love not
being able to choose...& I
fall into your arms
eroded by day

3.

this photograph of you

I spilled
beer on —left
out to dry in
the sun

while we went walking
(Trastevere

—over the Tiber)
now
shows the exact
wrinkled contour

of the light
as it was the first time we met;

4.

you said you never go
this far with someone you hardly
know but feel certain now.
Back to bathing
in each other's
sweat
feet wrapped in hotel sheets
that same night you said nothing
is finished the first time & so
we continue painting over
a picture of me asleep you scribble *here lies*

one whose name was writ in water

Bells — Monte 7/10/17

keen clear sound

bells

from the Basilica

displacing the flotsam of noise

white mist from a million cars

already taking to the roads

ones I have walked

ones

I professed to know

mess of the city

mess of our bodies

I anticipate the second

& third waking

as an act of levelling

your hand pulls at mine

guides it to your neck

arrogant the heart

half asleep with love

a history of gestures

the endless city is not

a timeless city

that last bell ringing

beatific

a religion of touch

there is no use denying

what I can feel with my own hands

words never more true

A Roman Holiday

a plot with cracks so big you can put your hand through them
big enough to scare Audrey Hepburn into thinking you aren't acting
tourists hang around buying old roman coins you can't buy anything with
while we reach the end of a very long line for a frankly soggy pizza
like red sauce staining my white linen shirt I know you'll never leave me
I don't have to throw you over my shoulder into the Fontana di Trevi
though your eyes turn exactly that colour (turquoise & dazzling)
when you get that close to money / that far away from home
losing track of time & when I think I'm taking us somewhere unique
we end up back at the same café by the convertible church where I drink
the best coffee I've ever had—altering my definition now I've had the real thing
I start re-enacting the scenes you like best until you physically restrain me
from hiring a Vespa & I'm only convinced when you remind me I'm no good
cursing in Italian—who needs conversation when you've got car horns?
putting our lives in the hands of other road users & Romantics
the footpath is drenched in so much ancient light it almost makes you sick
with nostalgia—the way I keep spilling champagne on your trousers
 you figure something must be up
 no one goes to this much effort for a bad joke

LANDSCAPE

more time this
timeless matter

over air

no more than our shadows

La Vague

I'm on your side
as language transitions
is translation
between us
celebrating vagueness
in the city
making loose plans
to meet up again
a meeting
the wine
our words
the dark billowing
of them
vague as an object
as a subject of clarification
clarity & claret
though they just call it
chianti here
drifting together, as I
yes I will catch you up
the emphasis falls
on drift
in drifting
together as the waves
call out
calling out other people
for their vagueness
a product of the subjects
we slip between
I always keep some time
up my sleeve
apologising
when it is called for
there is no emphasis
I can stress enough
& on my own again
called out for being
calling out to you
the waves call out briefly
call out briefly to us

Passing Duino

“The Mediterranean, at least—the Atlantic is brown—is always just white, white, white.”

— Cy Twombly

shifting landscape blurs days
still jet lagged wednesday eyes half
closed the doors I can't stamp the date
the way we have our tickets
tracks tapping out an exact rhythm
low in the sky the sun you are
asleep on my shoulder your late afternoon
thoughts wound down &
syncing ourselves the slow circularity
like a surging wave of language that
book spine down on your lap
you duck beneath now your head
bobbing with each contour
of the coastline & feeling
the words speeding through my
half asleep to the sound of the waves
last night re-reading his quote
re: the mediterranean considered
as white (all white) a white out of
white washing the field of vision
peeling words off the page my eyes
lift up to the window in that moment
waiting to adjust to the dazzling
horizon without marking features
blinding how a life might look in a flash
or a brief pause between acts
tranquillity followed by a sense of
action—I must do something do I
wake you reach across you for the camera
inside the lens inside this carriage this
memory I am having again (his)
moving through it unable to capture the absence
I let you keep sleeping your thoughts
alone but my phone I sneak from my pocket
a photograph a memory trailing the cloud of smoke
I have it now inherited this memory
to share with you upon waking

Sapphic

we fold together like two grand pianos

I keep my theories out of the wind (concealed)

reading into fragments of an ancient gaze

it's as if to sing the way you make me feel

smarted by those first lyrics & shy to speak

I am another before I am myself

the start of the body the end of the song

This Too Has Colour (Scatole Personali)

Rome opens its doors
but is never around
when I choose to stay in

so in a way
we miss each other
but still I get to enjoy
sifting through their cupboards
& using their wifi

I figure
it's a shame I can't draw

this would be the perfect park
to sketch portraits in

laying on my elbow
a closed bracket

the curved terrace
of houses in this quarter

the way grass
cheap wine
& the afternoon
do their best to stop you
in your tracks

in their wake

walking through the cemetery
looking for Keats

finding out the
significant difference
between
a sculpture & a headstone

between
a mausoleum & a museum

timing
matters less
drinking it in
as we are
here

you are here
with me

on a much-photographed balcony
of yesterday

of today
the flowers in this terracotta
pot have not changed
much

a view of the colosseum
holding still

our most recent
disagreement is over
definition
& destination

I like seeing likeness
in the throes of morning
waking up when I am you
until I come back
from the bathroom
a little more me

warm sun
on this balcony
recalls a distant ache

blinding
that deep ember
it comes to unfuck the morning

as I'm taut

& shimmering

shaking like wires above a tram
transformed by
misplaced electricity

in the whirr of a laptop opening
a kettle peaking

the coffee comes
only a little
more bitter
than the day before

cafés
marking each hour of the morning

the piazza
sets one against the other
as if fixed hinges on a sundial
time stands still

watching locals
enjoy their toast
smothered in thick jam

taking pictures of one another
waiting on the gutter

ads on the park bench
& discount stores
diabetic with colour
bottles of drink & souvenirs
I don't need

walking out of the restaurant
into the eternal city

lights in this hallway
persistent
on the marble floor

our footsteps
as the rain slides off us
half drunk

carafes left on the table
returning from dinner

each night moves me
closer to the next

dissolving
like heat does from the shadow
cast by the church's reach

walking
back to the pensione
around the colosseum
as the sun is coming up
the streets are still beautiful
sleeping

& perhaps that's the closest
I'll get to feel you breathing

roller doors return
to queues reforming
my love of language
formed by a lack
of understanding

breathing
is not one's signature

this is the long way of getting to the gallery
I take it

like those sculptures in the foyer
that don't really announce themselves
as sculptures
by their conversation

I'm taking pictures

of the floor

sparrows
gossiping on the window

the chlorine green fountain
that sits switched off
in October

where pizzas come an hour late
& a metre long

the alley
where we argue even longer
too early for aperol

not a colour as much as
it is a surface tension

painting over is painting
just the same

the impression
of rain

how it reacts with marble
turning it dark
pressing itself deep
into the crevices

self portrait in Monte
in the light above this mirror
that must be new

& I have never known myself so well

this greying man
asks me to open the window
on the moving train

my poor italian is mistaken for
awe-struck humility

rushing in

there is no music in this bedsit
but the twinkle of my keys
on the bedside table

a block away
from the main square

a set of stairs
has outlived whatever
it once led to

& is in that way
artistic

birds at the café
sparrows
dipping their beaks into
cups so small
the novelty disappears

one sips a short black
opaque
on the counter

leaving very quickly

tumbling through the tight streets
our argument

follows all this way

vague sound of a mambo
playing through a portable radio
sauntering drunkenly through

archways
like aqueducts
beneath people's houses

& isn't it great

the echoing
smell of it all
old stone

holy water
from a crumbling font

the atmosphere
of autobiography lingers

but too many loose knots
tied up
lay useless on the pier

belief as only an ochre sky
can give

as those last boats
return

following easily

tracing the gesture of the wind
in the act of tracing

sustaining an ellipsis
of white birds trailing off

a message carried home

to every bar
we are welcomed in
with salt
to stop us leaving

licking your lips
in your sleep

children on the street
walk up to you
& smother you with orange
prosecco kisses

like you're a low-key movie star
or a tourist in the sixties

heat
trapped in the corso

rising up through our seats
translates
as tingling in our cheeks

riding home
from the beach
white line of salt
drying into our clothes

the water keeps us
wide eyed for sleep

the day does nothing
but strip itself away
revolving to escape the sun
but only briefly

sky stretched as tight as skin
the clouds
wish to be considered
but overlook what the ocean
cannot be made
to give away

the sound never travels
as far away
as I am from

an invitation
extending almost
to the horizon's
burnt edge

the bay
deep green lines etched

into the hillside
wind their way skyward

an irregular flicker of lights
trailing up the side
reappearing from hairpins

the glow & hum of Napoli
behind the hills

waiting for us

ocean turns the colour of possibility
a hot purple-pink
holding desperately on to the last light
of the afternoon

a fish shop's blue neon
the flashing red & green

traffic lights
on the street below

soon there is nothing
but a palette of shades
mixed together
in the darkened room

watching you sleep is like watching
wine in a glass

primed for anything
this too has colour

CERTAINTY

white

light

writing

Leaves

swept up in the calm gesture of leaving
in order to be somewhere new either
the branch reaches down

 & taps you on the shoulder
or you pull the cord for the hazer
behind you

 dense clouds gather
a lifetime of misapprehensions
cueing up to jump the fence

 between the two of us
we shop our love around
the tyrrhenian & the adriatic

 the moment
we are all for crossing over

word after borrowed word

 I am bringing you closer still
 closer & into my chest
soon we are colouring over outlines
of one another's best work
running my mouth against yours
racing against the written word
on each page facing a different translation

lived experience seeping through
a split in the seam of our romance
 unspoken

lips quiver barely able to suppress a sneeze
 holding a pepper grinder of non-sequiturs

I drag a finger to my lips
in front of a thousand cameras triggered by the
very thought of this happening once only

 that momentary
 release packs its own parachute

 a flag to wave of right now is equally

a sheet we turn over together

a set of ears to hand over to our hosts
scare quotes raised above our heads
in earnestness

you drop into my open hands
as real as the open ocean being here

the leaf optimistically
pushing back against the wind

ALIVE

between two parentheses

Hymn to Possibility

on the balcony
looking out onto a life not lived
both ancient & immediate
the sea breeze rolls through
up here the air
thins out like greying hair
whispers of it
whipping into his face
sun bronzed but
nonetheless delicate
young bookish
his life book-
ending here
on the promontory
of a premonition
children swept
away by the ocean
swelling with constant
distemper
tossing them
upon the rocky cove
as he is sitting in silence
isolated on this balcony
overlooking Viareggio
the last of the amber light
washing back out to the horizon
his wish is to say again
the name of this place
so that it might not vanish
like his appetite
like the light
shifting in his seat
exile is as vast as the view
that stretches out before him
remaining as intimate as a child
not yet named
places people
are words only
rolling over in his mouth
each untied to the last

what is it that holds the world
together in its innermost folds?
of course there is writing
& there is dying too
but if there is writing & not dying
perhaps there is
writing & living forever

Song of the Sea / to Shelley

*from sea
night*

pure space

*how felt
fig-tree
in the moonlight*

to swimming in your jacket
two sizes too big for me
 I shift around
the tide returning
in the final act apologetically
bringing with it a box full of night

the curtain closing lit
so delicately by
footlights below
shells projecting light

trawlers returning empty
barren shop windows
reflect our searching
 drooping
eyelids back at us

he doth not sleep
but suffer a sea-change
into something strange
 & rich

imagine I catch your head
in the curve of my open palm

whilst casting outward
in the moment of
rhetoric

now up to our necks in it
(silence)
wading through the illusion of space
exile created by the crest of coastline
echo chamber of antiquity
you sought/I seek
a song of the sea

at the high watermark
waves clutch
at the crushed diamonds
of moonlight remaining
sounding the cruel spit of the surf

yawning for more
when no one is watching
the crisp comma
I trace around your face
sleeves of that enormous jacket
advancing on my elbows

a crescendo
this crescent gives
a thought to speech
but stops just short
of seeing you safely
home

a wet volume of Keats in your pocket
& your heart ends up in Trelawney's

For Them to Come

one candle is enough

kindlier

when shadows come

the room

immersed

in suggestion

up late turning
each word into a declaration
some alchemy I pocket
to accompany me on the streets where
quotes come back twisted
like a wire fence I cut myself
 on trying to escape
a waste of breath
enclosed beneath this roof of sky
a searching beam that
finds us washed up
on the shore of morning
a gesture crossing porous borders
until it is enacted
extracted from my head
& offered to you
an outstretched hand
casts shadows on the ceiling
that touch continues surging
until the sun is up

Sun Stone

sun reaches forward
retracing the days of ours
half-naked asleep

*these two take their clothes off
to reach themselves in touching*

grasping at spring
I notice only the breeze
catching the curtain

*there are rooms that are adrift
that look out on other rooms*

gaze of the low moon
on the other horizon
leering in its decay

*in a gulf of brilliance
everything is transfigured*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

the one note sermon
your face is all their faces
today the first day

last night gently resolving
as the bay's gilded surface

shining like a bird
under the arches of light
city by the sea

where we sleep is where we live
where we love, where we defend

you are a rampart
come face to face with daylight
face of lightning-flash

not enough to shift us yet
we kiss with our eyes still closed

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

clasped tight in our fists
and held high above our heads
the moon as white mist

*the resonant presences
in the procession of waves*

each pouring over
bodies in feverish heat
held up to the light

*enlivened by energy
I burn and am not consumed*

immersed in words
a library of fire
pages sparked from contact

*burning suit of flame
and I have gone down*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

as among the world
I go among your body
there is no time here

shrouded beneath the white sheet
ever writing palimpsests

hand which will dissolve
in search of my one moment
collect my fragments

language scattered across seas
swimming through the washed up words

writing of the sea
and pouring out prophecies
place where I am you

nameless and renamed again
our love holds us together

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

rhythm of the tide
mirrored in our love it shifts
looping through in knots

corridors of memory
each room is now the centre

heart as a chamber
room for a suitcase my books
settled in motion

a river that goes curving
time in an ancient gesture

sculptures crumbling
thoughts removed from the body
disappearing light

until all is overlapped
I am not there is no I

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*between two mirrors
the future and the fateful
galleries of sound*

symptoms of synaesthesia
while white silence is observed

*red by the red walls
there is nothing before me
rose coloured centre*

focus on the terraces
awash with ancient sunlight

*here, and the day ends
make peace among my ashes
recovered tonight*

and arriving forever
here the moon arches its back

A Hymn to Possibilities

on the balcony
struck by the quiet
of this ageless moment
up here with the
sea birds holding their pitch
against the breeze
effortless flags of surrender
tilt to fill empty pockets of time
from the zig zag
of a switchback road
I see myself tracing
these same streets
Hadrian might have
& might again
a broad brush
capturing this
coarse delicacy
it's a concern less
about photography
or aerial views but
to gauge that
vague electrical hum
that once fired off
filament after filament
& which now washes in
like waves
of light at the instruction
of the moon
perhaps there is painting
in this light
& living
forever

DAWN

I open my eyes
still

Opera Bar Bazzanti

overture

my dream a drink with the cyclone
where we are discussing weather patterns
paintings & the sky
the way the waves push
against the cliffs
beneath the Castello
where the old part of Gaeta
pokes out into the Tyrrhenian
like a trochaic foot
severed at the ankle broken
off of a statue toppled
in a storm or in a revolution
& this is all that remains

I don't do things in halves
between the seen & the remembered
in the borrowed light
from a poem by Cavafy
these same tables & chairs
belonging to a taverna long closed
but vivid now
I order a bottle of blanco
not doing things in halves

aria da capo

I am open to the night
its live changes
at ease in the residual heat
of its surface
shifting between the
different scenes
evening setting
with great drinking
comes great possibility
I give in to those
half-real moments
bright energy
incandescence
into it I go

as the night opens up
to me

I don't do things in halves
drinking as one
who is unafraid of pleasure
drinks—as one who
is remembering the feeling
recovers that lost part
of themselves half
remembered drinks

chorus

by the sea by the sea
how happy we will be
at the bar bazzanti

families ease past without
a second glance
fishermen
send out one line apiece
for something to do
with their hands
two men smoking cigars
behind us
their raspy voices
as course as their inhalations
young men leaning on
their vespas
whistling at a group of girls
across the street
sitting on a park bench texting
giggling now

ensemble

typically late season
where the gelato store is open
but not busy
the girl behind the counter
watches television on her phone

the sound spills into the square

looping around
the public bus
from the old part of town
threading the needle
of history
taking itself back
every half an hour
puffing past us
the driver switches
on the headlights

old vinyl seats
the light from the
curved streetlamp
sticking to them
the way age tends
to stick to us all

chorus

by the sea by the sea
how happy we will be
at the bar bazzanti

*PAINTER kicks the chair out from under the
table
careful not to pay too much mind to the arrival
of his guest*

*POET uncertain of what to say—hesitates to
speak first*

PAINTER: you'll drink?

PAINTER signals to WAITER

POET: of course

(silence)

pointing to the flecks of paint on the painter's shirt

POET: so did you work today?

duo

PAINTER: the light wasn't right

WAITER arrives carrying a bottle of white wine and a glass placing both in front of the POET

POET: does that happen often?

PAINTER pouring wine into both their glasses

PAINTER: more often than you'd think

(silence)

POET picks up glass and holds it around head height

POET: what should we toast to?

PAINTER: to this to being here
 & to no more questions

let the silence do its work

24 Poems / to the Sea

with the cyclone
discussing weather patterns
& the sky
the waves push
the cliffs
beneath the Castello
part of Gaeta
into the Tyrrhenian

broken

remains

my dream
where we are
paintings
the way
against
beneath
where the old
pokes out
like
severed
off
in a storm
& this is all

**ESSAY: Twombly, *Translatio* and Contemporary Indirect-
Ekphrasis**

“Who is Cy Twombly?” asks Roland Barthes in his 1976 essay “Works on Paper”, and importantly, “What is it he does?” (185). Years later, it seems these elemental questions are as enduring as the late painter’s works of “gestural expressionism” themselves (Varnedoe “Your Kid Could Not Do This” 20). They capture the unresolved sources of intrigue and fascination that have established Twombly as one of the most provocative visual artists of the late 20th Century. The painter demonstrated a unique process, incorporating intertextual material in his work, that has led him to be dubbed “a poet in paint” by recent critical-biographer Mary Jacobus (n.p). As an analogue for my own style of poetry, it is significant how his art exacts a particular balance between intimacy and opacity that is able to remain personal by inviting the audience into the process of the work’s creation. Building on the critical work developed in the first two chapters, my study of Twombly identifies the physical and visual aspects of his oeuvre—such as the scale of his work, his obsession with whiteness, and the use of his body in response to material—to be incorporated into my own textual creative work. Positing the painter’s integration of source material as *translation*—that from Ruth Webb’s survey of ancient ekphrasis is defined as “imitation that is also invention” (7)—I trace his process-based practice to conceptualise an indirect mode of contemporary ekphrasis that fulfils my boundary conditions for abstract ekphrasis: to be both discernibly linked to existing works of art and a wholly creative act in itself.

My first encounter with the work of Twombly was reading his obituary in the *New York Times*. The lead image on the article, titled “American Artist Who Scribbled a Unique Path”, showed an old man standing, hands behind his back in front of a multi-panelled, mural-sized painting named in the caption beneath as *Untitled (1994) (Say Goodbye Catullus to the Shores of Asia Minor)* (n.p). Almost eight years after seeing this image for the first time, it is hard to define what exactly piqued my interest in the artist and his work, but perhaps the

questions from Barthes that I began the chapter with are the most appropriate summation of what has impelled me throughout the intervening years. This introduction to the artist's work at the moment of the artist's death has precipitated a new body of creative and critical work years later, that seeks to engage with Barthes' orienting principles of identity.

As a progression from writing ekphrastic poetry directly, as in Chapter One, or indirectly in the space of a gallery, as in Chapter Two, this third chapter is entirely devoted to writing ekphrasis, again indirectly, but this time in consideration of a painter's oeuvre: their biography, their influences and the scholarship that surrounds their work. This is an ekphrasis written in light of the "relevant contextual information" that is so vital to the Intentionalist philosophers discussed in Chapter One (Zangwill 79). In particular, following the statement from Richard Wollheim, that "if we are interested in painting as such or individual paintings, we must start with the artist" (36), I wish to employ this interpretive lens to generate an ekphrasis that is able to subvert the long-held dependence on the visual image as the only source of material for the ekphrastic poet. In the same way that intimacy was essential to maintain the attention of the speaker to the works of art in the critical meandering of Chapter Two, there is a significant demand on the poet in this third mode to retain a close relationship with the elements that were essential to the artist in their life and work.

Working in this biographical mode, my approach has been influenced by Richard Holmes, whose two books *Footsteps: The Adventures of a Romantic Biographer* and *Shelley: The Pursuit*, set a precedent for the generative potential of walking in the footsteps of artists from another time. Considered from the perspective of the "searching itself" paradox derived from Jan Jagozinski in the previous chapter, the work of a critical research scholar like Holmes "produces its own object cause" (27). The result of almost six years critically immersed in the

poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, by travelling to the places in Italy where the poet lived, *The Pursuit* is a remarkable example of the potential for embodied engagement with existing works of art through attention to the biographical circumstances that brought about the work's creation. As ekphrasis has always taken place after an existing work of art and is unable to be synthesised back into the original existing work, the process of the Romantic biographer is naturally akin to that of the ekphrastic poet, hence why I have titled the creative work in this section "Footsteps: Poems to the Sea after Cy Twombly". Holmes' writing is example of the potential for profound, experiential scholarship tied to a physical place to better understand a work of art and to generate new work as a result of this intimate attention.

The subtitle, "Poems to the Sea" shares its title with a sparse series of drawings that Twombly completed in an apocryphal single day of productive creativity. Rather than write with the specific drawings in mind, I have chosen this title as a synecdoche for his oeuvre. It evokes the blurred inter-media aspect of his work that is essential to my own, as well as the geographical significance of the Italian coastline. The equivalently direct, but vague language of the title should not be discounted either, as Joshua Rivkin writes, such a title could be considered as "ode or elegy, plea or offering" (80). Furthermore, the title may be read as organising principle for the collection of poems as a vector: making their way toward the sea. As Kirk Varnedoe writes "few artists' work seems so closely—one wants to say nakedly—tied to the vicissitudes of an individual temperament unfolding in time" ("Inscriptions in Arcadia" 61). If this reading of the title conjures up the motif of a journey, a narrative "unfolding in time", this would certainly be an appropriate way to conceptualise how Twombly's work has led my own practice over these past years.

I am interested in the way that J L Austin's Speech Act theory (the root of the performance-based *methetic* practice of Carter, Haseman and Bolt discussed in Chapter One) can be applied to the work of Twombly by expanding on the equivalence between works of visual and verbal art. To amend slightly Barthes' questions, is to ask one of the most fundamental questions of a work of literature in regard to Twombly's artworks: *Who is speaking?*

Prosopopoeia, defined in the last chapter as, "envoicing [sic] a silent object" may figure as the logical form of engagement in the context of mimetic ekphrastic poems (Heffernan 301). However, I wish to proceed with Sir Philip Sydney's definition of ekphrasis as a "speaking picture" as it better establishes the equivalence between the two non-representational artistic processes (80). Both Twombly's works and my own could equally be referred to by this definition. It is not my role as a poet in this mode to speak on behalf of Twombly, but rather to follow the example of how he incorporates existing material into his work—to learn to speak how he speaks. Lucy Potter's study of the classical rhetorical devices *enargia* and *translatio*—the first as a way of bringing the audience into the process of creation, and the second recalling Webb's definition of "imitation understood as invention"—are two techniques that allow the Twombly's art to speak for itself (318-19). Rather than conduct a dialogue with the past, Twombly's work subsumes other works into his own to form a unique style of monologue that is both equally original and referential—meeting the two criteria set out in the introduction that an abstract ekphrastic poem must retain to remain ekphrastic.

One of the reasons why Twombly's art speaks for itself and ultimately why his art presents such an interesting biographical challenge is the scarcity of para-textual material available in the artist's own words. He was a very private person who gave only a handful of reluctant interviews. He refrained from commenting on the work of his contemporaries and rarely wrote contextualising artist statements. Some of the only material written by Twombly comes

from the letters that he sent to the Virginia Museum of Fine Art during his first trip to Italy acquitting his travelling artist's fellowship (Cullinan 460). His application letter for this same fellowship in 1952 contains a very brief statement of his artistic practice that serves as some of the only information in his own words about his intentions as a young artist (Cullinan 462). Once he had moved to Rome in 1957, he was marked as an outsider by American critics, returning to the United States only to exhibit sporadically over the following decades before serious critical appraisal of his work arrived with his MoMA retrospective in 1985. For many years the artist managed successfully to fade into the mythology of the Classical and Romantic subjects he alluded to in the titles of his work. No one yet has been granted access to the material that might allow for such a comprehensive biographical work to be undertaken, but gaps and silences like these do allow the space for myth to develop. I find this same concept to be vitally important in the interpretation of his art.¹⁰

Surfaces in Twombly's work are replete with negative space and the calculated absence of figures. Jacobus reads this as an echo of Stéphane Mallarmé's sparse, chance-driven, all-over-the-page poem *Un Coup De Dés Jamais N'abolira Le Hasard* (84-85). In the verbal art of poetry, the temptation is to read empty space as breath; where time is able to pass between one textual fragment and the next when read aloud. Meaning is constructed in these pauses as the reader inserts their own associative and interpretive faculties. Yet, the empty space in Twombly's work is never empty and never silent. The background of a Twombly canvas is a

¹⁰ Published late in 2018, Joshua Rivkin's *Chalk: The Art and Erasure of Cy Twombly* is certainly, for its ability to go beneath the surface of many of the secrets around Twombly's life (his marriage, his sexuality, his exile), the closest thing to a biography of this sort. And yet, the author has recounted how the research he conducted for this book was not endorsed, but rather impeded by the estate of Twombly, accusing him of reproducing "gossip" (Corbett n.p). In contrast there are the officially endorsed scholarly works, such as Mary Jacobus' *A Poet in Paint* and Varnedoe's "Inscriptions in Arcadia" (the monograph written for Twombly's MoMA retrospective)—both of which provide a critical perspective on Twombly's work with a bare minimum of biographical detail. Rivkin's book is a unique blend of biography and auto-biography, less focused on the art as it is with the person and for this reason was most useful to my project in postulating the personal aspects of the artist's experience.

barely muted presence. Like whispers or uninvited memories trying to poke through the surface of the painting's articulated speech, as in Part V from Twombly's 1978 series *Fifty Days at Iliam* [sic], these covered words suggest "the unconscious has the structure of a language" (Lacan qtd. in Johnston n.p). Lacan points out that "our unconscious is the voice of the other" (qtd. in Johnston n.p). Although it appears that these obstructed words belong to the speaker as they pierce the surface, really, they are the voices of external influences. The surface of the painting recalls an existing ancient surface, like that of a nondescript wall in Rome, that contains a collective cultural memory and history: between these layers, Twombly inserts himself. The poet Charles Olson, who knew Twombly when he studied at Black Mountain College described this method of Twombly's as "inverse archaeology"—a process of burying meaning rather than digging it up (qtd. in Greub 227). This idea returns in my poem "Roman Wall / to Twombly Canvas" in the line "bones carefully buried / that someone like me / might trip on" (3: 145). Whilst this poem is not directly linked to a specific surface of Twombly's, it does engage in a more conventionally ekphrastic way with the appearance of a surface. It adopts his process of burying influence within his work, that I mimic within the layers of the poem. The line, "I / am a layered event" (3: 145), intertextually weaves a line from John Forbes' poem "Panto" into my own poem (18). This is an endless cycle of layering and subsuming existing other voices into a work that is executed in the perpetual present; only for that work eventually to be subsumed into another work another present compositional moment in the future.

Twombly was less attuned to the geography of the Italian coastline as an element that may figure in his painting as he was to its access to the extensive mythology residing there. Myth allows for endless adaptation, translation and derivations citing different, sometimes conflicting sources. Speaking names again breathes life back into them. It allows the

characters in Twombly's painting *The House of Priam* to remain alive. Similarly, the Tyrrhenian sea where Twombly lived for much of his life, has been visited and revisited for thousands of years. Goethe, whose text, *Italian Journey* is one of the sources woven into Twombly's *Goethe in Italy* (1978), visited the area in 1786 and was inspired by the "classical soil" (Jacobus 136). That this coastline has been a constant source of inspiration for a host of artists, not just Twombly, is what the section of poems that is book-ended by the diptych of "Hymn to Possibility" and "A Hymn to Possibilities" evokes by tying together the narratives of Shelley and Twombly. Both poems begin "on the balcony" and bring each artist into the present compositional moment (3: 169 & 180). The moment of contemplation that both poems examine is an example of *enargia*. This highlights my own compositional process within this section of poems "between two parentheses" by revisiting the processes of these two artists with whom I have, on my own Italian journey, shared a stretch of coastline.

Stressing the vital role of location to this approach evidences the ability for history to be revisited, as Twombly frequently did through his process of intertextual allusion. In a similar way to *House of Priam*, Twombly's *Vengeance of Achilles* from 1962 includes graphic rather than linguistic text on his canvas. Much like a graffiti artist who might tag their work upon completion, Twombly includes the date and place of his composition. This is another type of *enargia*, alluding to process, that asserts symbolically: *I was here*. In my poem, "Bells", I include "—Monte 7/10/17" to mark the occasion of the poem's composition (3: 150). This mimics the effect of Twombly's work by distilling history and influence into a single moment.

One of the most creatively alluring properties of Twombly's work is its scale. To be able to present an individual "unfolding in time" the work of art must provide the space for this to

occur (Varnedoe 61). Ashbery's "Self Portrait" runs at 527 lines and the significance of this poem as a complete and dynamic precedent for contemporary ekphrasis cannot be overstated in its capacity to incorporate such an array of voices. Paradoxically, the reason that Twombly's works are so often considered intimate is because of their size; as to be overwhelmed is to be immersed—much like Edmund Burke's inclusion of "vastness" as one of the properties of the sublime (2.8). Jacobus is eager to draw a parallel between vagueness present in Twombly's work and waves, that, in French is translated as "*la vague*" (81-84). The effect of this *faux-amis* underpins the long poems in this collection of poems that all take place within the presence of the sea: "Sun Stone", "This Too Has Colour (Scatole Personali)" and "Opera Bar Bazzanti". The formal separation between images in these poems echoes the "pulsions [sic]" that Barthes identifies as Twombly's moments of creative production; of working in waves with periods of space between (174). As Jacobus writes regarding the "linked elegance" of the ancient Japanese poetic form Renga:

Lacking narrative time-sequence or emotional development, these sequences depended on the links between images within a single stanza, and on the larger movement implied by the gaps between them. Twombly refers pleasurably to the series [*Blossoms*] as having "passages" rather than connections. (213-14)

Although Renga is traditionally written collaboratively with one or many other poets exchanging lines, my Renga, "Sun Stone", was written as a cento borrowing lines from the long poem of the same name by Octavio Paz (3: 174-79). As a note on the composition of this poem, my attempt was to adapt my use of language and imagery to match that of Paz's, such that a reader might not be able to tell whether it was the italicised phrases or the unitalicised phrases which belonged to Paz. It is an obscure mode of collaboration that through

mimicry aspires to the conceal the speaker's voice within another's. Yet, this creative act has a precedent in Paz's own work, as a similarly vague and "retrospective collaboration" with ten paintings of Twombly's was published in 1991 (Jacobus 235). This joint publication, *The Gaeta Set (for the Love of Fire and Water)* was a source of great joy for Twombly who reported that upon reading the book even he "could not be certain whether it was Paz' [sic] poetry that inspired his *Gaeta Set*, or else his drawings that inspired Paz' [sic] poems" (qtd. in Jacobus 234). For such a convergence to take place, it is a testament to the universality of Paz's language, that is far more involved with the Protean elements—the sun, the moon, light and water—than most euro-centric or North American contemporary poetry. Whilst Renga and the Mexican poet's work were both identified as influences on Twombly's work in Jacobus' study, there was no link made between them. My poem adopts the pastoral language of Paz that is well-suited to the "seasonal words and phrases" of Renga ("Haikai" 592). I selected short passages from Paz's long poem either 7 or 5 syllables in length and arranged them according the form of a spring *Kasen* Renga—a method that was a favourite of Basho (Evans n.p)—to create a new poem. This revives the language of Paz and the form of Basho to create a uniquely Twombly-influenced poem to address specific aspects of my own travel and writing.

Similarly, in "Opera Bar Bazzanti" I look to appropriate a formal element to develop an atmosphere in non-linear passages (3: 182-85). Bar Bazzanti is an actual bar on the shore of Gaeta, where two posters signed by Twombly hang above the doorway. On one he has written in his cresting, looping script: "By the sea / by the sea / how happy / we will be / at the Bar / Bazzanti". The opera form applied to poetry is a unique way of arranging different styles of writing—in a chorus to be repeated, in a duo to share dialogue between two voices, and in an aria da capo that introduces a theme in the first passage and then improvises on it in

the second and third passage of the aria. It is not uncommon for an opera to be set amongst a village of people, though as an opera set in this particular location, in a space so tied to Twombly and his art, this poem captures the juxtaposition between the high art connotations of the form and the quotidian elements of the place itself. Much like Twombly's art, there is a contrast between its high art pretensions which derive from its classical allusion and its proximity between people inhabiting a given moment. Gaeta, like much of Italy, is a site where this gaudy classicism collides with an urgent corporeality. This bodily, carnal element is a feature of the poem "I Went" by Constantine Cavafy (another one of the poets that Twombly kept in his library) that I quote in my poem (46). Much like "Above Us the Great Grave Sky after Arthur Streeton" from "Walking-Along-With", the use of distinct sections allows for multiple viewpoints to develop without a chronology. By drawing out the poem over a number of pages and perspectives, different storylines are able to intersect. With scale being one of the elements that is most synonymous with Twombly's work, longer poems feel most apposite to capturing the sensation of immersion that his artwork inspires.

In another long poem that adopts a unique style of arrangement, "This Too Has Colour (Scatole Personali)" (3: 156-64) is an example of what Michael Davidson has designated the "postmodern painterly poem", whereby a poet "activates strategies of composition equivalent to but not dependent on the painting" (72). When Robert Rauschenberg travelled with Twombly to Rome on his 1952 travel fellowship, one of the works that Rauschenberg made was a purpose-built shelf of different sized boxes to be laid on the ground of the exhibition space. These "personal boxes" each contained a different object accumulated from one of the many flea markets that he had visited with Twombly (Jacobus 30). In his adaptation of the *wunderkammer*, Rauschenberg saw *Untitled [Scatole Personali]* (translated as "personal boxes") as an opportunity to "ennoble the ordinary" (qtd. in Jacobus 31). The details that are

included in my poem are the composite of a selection of passages from the journal that I kept during my travels in Italy. Each box-stanza in the poem contains its own individual sensory experience.

archways

like aqueducts

beneath people's houses

& isn't it great

the echoing

smell of it all

old stone

holy water

from a crumbling font

the atmosphere

of autobiography lingers (3: 161-62)

Unlike Rauschenberg's physical object that is arranged non-sequentially, the poem has syntax imposed upon it that, in the accrual of all these details, develops into a narrative.

As the inspiration for "This Too", I was considering the manner in which contemporary long poems allow time to naturally impose itself on the poem. In Tim Wright's "November" the speaker invites the reader into a poem that is a twenty page catalogue of observations

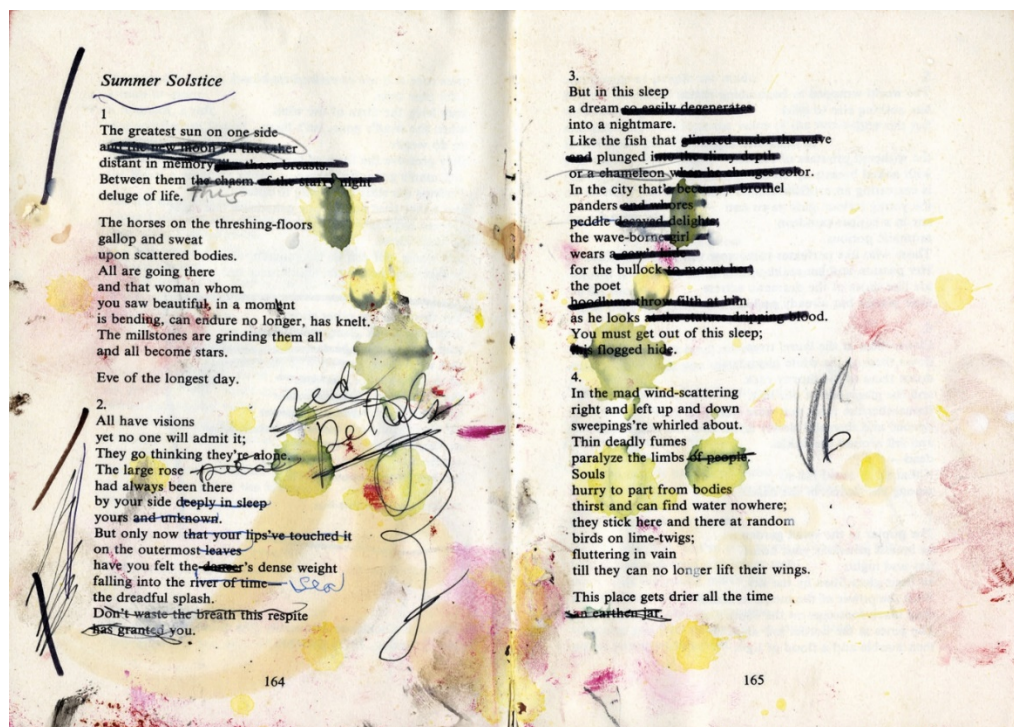
stretching the length of the entire month. Within this time-capsule of a poem, there is the distinct sense of the “individual temperament unfolding in time” that Varnedoe ascribes to Twombly’s work as the poet returns to and reconsiders various attitudes and statements as the poem progresses. As if a response to Wright’s poem,¹¹ Melody Paloma suggests in her long poem “Gimme Gimme Gimme”, that a revelation is able to be experienced in the real time of writing the poem. The present tense of the verb “realise” provides this time-scale, in the passage: “realise / you can put it all in / one poem / if you learn to steer properly” (43). As “This Too” was focussed on evoking a certain sense of place and displacement through a catalogue of pleasures and location specific observations, I considered the potential for the long poem to convey the experience of moving through an actual physical location. Andrew McMillan’s long poem “Protest of the Physical” provides an intimate selection of snapshots to immortalise his native Barnsley in verse (21). As a method to present the actual sensations of Rome and Gaeta, two places that were essential to Twombly’s practice, I found the long, painterly poem, as Ashbery did in “Self Portrait”, most appropriate for the task.

One of the most daring aspects of Ashbery’s poem that is echoed in the intertextual practice of Twombly is how the poet is able to treat Parmigianino’s painting as a “frozen gesture of welcome”: an invitation to use the existing work as the basis for his own (68). Taking the invitation that Ashbery garners from Parmigianino as his own, Michael Farrell’s collection *Thempark* is the Australian poet’s way of writing through the work of Ashbery. Farrell “superimposes” his own poems onto the poetry of Ashbery in *Hotel Lautreamont* and *Where Shall I Wander*, using the existing poems as “templates...dropping the capital letters but retaining the original word counts, lineation and punctuation” (Fitch 13). Not only is Farrell’s

¹¹ On page 43 of “Gimme Gimme Gimme”, Paloma writes “Like Tim does in November”. Given that both of these books were published by the Australian Non-fiction Poetry imprint *Rabbit Poetry Series*, I don’t believe I am making a baseless assumption that Wright is the “Tim” to whom Paloma is referring.

use of source material unique, but it is simultaneously referential: it retains a link to the pre-existing text. Farrell suggests a logic that a contemporary ekphrastic poet might follow.

Twombly's art similarly evidences the malleability of source material and the possibility for it to be generative. The following image is taken from Twombly's copy of *Three Secret Poems* by the Greek Poet George Seferis:



(qtd. in Jacobus 7)

The image shows that Twombly is able to find his own “secret poem” within and beyond the poem as it appears in the book. The poem that Twombly creates through his redactions is now the template for my own poem “Writing into Light (A Secret Poem)” (3: 148-49). Using Farrell’s method to constrain word count, lineation and punctuation, I superimpose my own poem onto the template of Twombly’s redaction of Seferis. Like Farrell writing his own poem through Ashbery, my poem is now intimately linked with Twombly in a textual way, by composing from his redaction as if it were his own poem. In *redactor* by Australian poet

Eddie Paterson, the act of “with-holding” detail through his use of black marks evidences how a work is able to be created through negation as attention is drawn to the “red(actor)” holding the black marker (Symes n.p). The intention of the abstracting gesture is unique and personal.

Not only does Twombly create text through negation as Paterson does, but similarly, writing that takes place in the artist’s own “gauche” hand (Barthes 165), is an example of how obscuring the text enables the reading of the text to be amplified and prolonged. The artist’s scrawl across the canvas in *Fifty Days at Iliam (Part V)* reads, “the fire that consumes all before it” to rework a quote from Pope’s translation of the Iliad, “They pour along like a fire that sweeps the whole Earth before it” (92; Jacobus 124). This recalls Viktor Shklovsky’s definition of “defamiliarization”, that acts to heighten the agency of the artistic procedures that have gone into the creation of the obstruction (12-13). Twombly’s absence creates a presence, as the artist becomes the “fire” that “consumes” from his work’s title. The physicality of the redactive or recitative gesture on a Twombly canvas, even the graffito/time-stamp gestures referred to earlier, all affirm the physical presence of the artist. Twombly’s line is the extension of what Barthes sees as Twombly’s inimitability: “what is ultimately inimitable is the body... i.e that which can be divided no further” (170-71). As intertextual reference performed through the body becomes new original material, this suggests that Twombly’s unique style of *translatio* ultimately requires the intimacy of physical contact.

Redaction features in my own poetry as a method to distil an existing work that results in a new poem and contrastingly, it also functions as a way of blossoming: opening the existing text up for re-translation. Both of these methods utilise the body in an intimate and inimitable way that evokes and maintains proximity to the influence of Twombly. The first method of

distillation is used in my five short poems “HERE”, “CERTAINTY”, “LANDSCAPE”, “ALIVE” and “DAWN”—all taken from a single page of poetry in the Eliot Weinberger translated *Selected Poems* of Paz—allows for space and breath to regulate the concentration of text in the sequence of poems. My poem “For Them to Come” presents a redacted form of Cavafy’s poem of the same title before leading into an extended re-translation of the redacted poem (102; 3: 173). This re-translation is approached through the body, using Auslan (Australian Sign Language) because the language possesses a unique physical correlate. Each sentence in Auslan involves developing a new choreography, as tense is not a feature of the language itself. Translating an existing work using Auslan, the work is made unique and immediately brought into the present tense. The Auslan Signbank is an online database with short videoclips demonstrating how to enact all of the 4774 words available to speakers of the various signed dialects in Australia. As I entered the words from the distilled version of Cavafy’s poem into the search engine, I began writing down associative descriptions of the performance of each word.

Whilst my own associative faculties are at work in this method, there is an element in which I am bound to the algorithmic logic of the search engine. As a method, the fixity of the signs that I am writing to introduces a degree of inflexibility into the process. As evidenced in my poem “La Vague”, written using a Markov Chain Text Generator app, the poem is not always in my control (3: 153). Twombly’s *Rose* canvases of 2008 exhibit an equivalent submission to the operations of chance, as the materiality of the paint performs the inevitable influence of gravity: the weight of the paint collapses in on itself (Jacobus 212). In the light of Mallarmé’s attestation that one cannot “abolish chance”, by setting such constraints the final result is somewhat beyond the poet’s control: as Alain Badiou says “To love poetry is to love not being able to choose” (“Rimbaud’s Method” 88). In “For Them to Come”, the current refugee

crisis in the Mediterranean is brought into the poem. This acknowledges another unavoidable, yet important part of the geography of the Italian coastline. In light of the different choices one can make and can choose to overlook in the process of producing art, by acknowledging the situation of asylum seekers the world over as one that cannot continue in such a detached and inhumane way, I hope to signpost that the actions made in response to this crisis are an opportunity for creative and empathetic thinking to prevail.

Rainer Maria Rilke is featured heavily in the later work of Twombly, particularly the *Rose* canvases that are exhibited in Munich's Museum Brandhorst, where I was fortunate enough to visit in 2017. Rilke's "Ninth Duino Elegy" is an exposition of the difficult to translate concept of "once-ness". Considering this concept in the context of *translatio* and performance-based practice, there are important metaphysics contained in this poem. Having read ten different English translations of this poem, I decided to distil the best-known version of the poem, translated by Stephen Mitchell, into a series of words that I would be able to run through the Auslan search engine. The result was the poem "Leaves", that perhaps more than any other poem enacts the mature form of *translatio* as ekphrasis (3: 166-67). My translation of the poem is both bodily and associative, sensitive to the physical location of where my experience of "once-ness" is enacted and to the relationship between painter and poet.

Taking a short excerpt from the poem's concluding stanzas, the line "a flag to wave of right now" is adapted from the sign for "present" (meaning "presently") as a way of turning the concept of "once-ness" from the original poem into an action (3: 166). Then, "a sheet we turn over together" is also a description of the sign for the word "present", but a homonym (as in "to hand over; or to award"), suggesting the transmission between one artist and another in this mode of translation across media (3: 166). The line "scare quotes raised above our heads

/ in earnestness / you drop into my open hands” ties back to the idea of *translatio* and quotation by alluding to the act of signing and the performative aspect of the language (3: 167).

Present-ness, or “once-ness” is the direct link between Twombly’s practice, Rilke’s poem and my own project of bringing existing works into the present moment through an indirect ekphrastic practice considered as *translatio*. Serendipitously, an excerpt from Mitchell’s translation of this poem appears on *Untitled (1994) (Say Goodbye Catullus to the Shores of Asia Minor)*, the first work I saw of Twombly’s when I read his obituary almost eight years ago.

Following Twombly’s example, my own practice of ekphrastic poetry considers the act of writing after any work of art to be an act of drawing together multiple sources into a monologue that evidences a performative intertextual experience. This enables the ekphrastic poet to create original work whilst remaining tied to a set of cultural-historical referents and locations. As Shelley writes in “Adonais”, “The breath whose might I have invoked in song / descends on me”, the process breathes life back into the work of artists who have passed before (LV 326). The ekphrastic poem, as *translatio*, creates what Barthes suggests is “neither Eros nor Thanatos, but Life-Death in a single thought, a single gesture” (165), retaining the poet’s unique and inimitable, enigmatic voice in the present compositional moment.

CONCLUSION

The principal aim of this thesis was to create a body of critical and creative work able to instantiate a contemporary poetics of non-descriptive ekphrastic writing: an abstract ekphrasis. This creative research co-emerged from a series of critical and creative developmental cycles, with the outcomes as the final essays and poems included in this thesis. My prompt for writing in a non-descriptive way was the problem of attempting to describe works of non-representational art. My focus on the personal was to provide a counter-intuitive way to pierce through the opacity of abstract works, positing that the abstract is not wholly detached or divorced from the everyday, but rather, the selectively concealed result of a very involved and intimate process of creative decision-making accounting for influence and expression.

It was Harold Rosenberg's contention regarding the removal of barriers between art and life brought about by the gestural abstractionist painters of New York in the late 1950s that encouraged me to regard the difficulty of abstract works created since this time as an invitation to experience deferred pleasure in delving into the obscured form of communication. Whilst the Ancient Greeks may have first used ekphrasis to communicate something essential by direct reference to an image, non-representational artworks by their design prolong the experience of interpretation. For poets and artists alike, the non-representational and non-descriptive offer opportunities for engagement beyond what is possible in more explicit forms of symbolism or address by dwelling in this interpretive space. As an approach, writing in response to the images contained on the surface of a work

of art in order to match the mimetic intention of the artist, no longer serves the poet in this revised and updated form of ekphrastic engagement.

The poet who wishes to explore beyond or beneath the surface of an artwork in an abstract ekphrasis must be prepared to engage personally with the artwork and to spend time in the physical space where artistic interpretation is performed. In Chapter One, a study of the statement from Kate Fagan outlines affect responses and research into relevant contextual information as the two aspects that the direct, abstract ekphrastic poet must be sensitive to in their work. Whilst the form of ekphrastic poetry explored in Chapter One shows the potential to balance these two criteria, the second and third chapters of the thesis examine what happens when the scales are tipped in an indirect ekphrastic encounter. These sections examine two limit cases; one where research is consciously overlooked in the process of meandering in the space of artworks, and another where surface affect responses are removed for the purpose of delving into the biographical, stylistic and thematic details present in an artist's oeuvre.

The poems contained in Chapters Two and Three create themselves as their own objects. Although these two modes of indirect engagement relate to the surface in very different ways, both modes are preoccupied with the elements that brought the works of art into being and both result from deep and lengthy engagements in a physical space. The process of engagement functions as the content of the poetry. In “Walking-Along-*With*”, the personal Event taking place within the context of a public Event results in the poem; in “Meandering”, a recount of the process of critical evaluation becomes the poem; and in “Footsteps: Poems to the Sea after Cy Twombly”, the lived experience re-visiting sites and texts that were important to the artist becomes the finished poem.

The work contained in these three chapters generates a poetics of abstract ekphrasis: to be engaged creatively with a work of art without relying on description; to proceed personally, seeking the personal elements in the work of art, such that this experience allows the poet to create work that is equivalently embodied and equally opaque (or rather abstract) in its presentation.

Linda Hutcheon defines a poetics as an apparatus that embeds itself within both theory and practice (17). The co-emergent, Practice as Research framework that I have used in presenting this thesis also blurs the critical and the creative, to be firmly enmeshed within both. From Chapter Three, the techniques of *enargia* and *translatio* allow the poet to trace the process of the artist such that this research becomes the lasting creative gesture. By engaging poetically, bodily, temporally and creatively with the artwork, the need for description is surpassed; as the work of art becomes personally enmeshed within the poet's own process.

The poems contained within each of the three sections are lyrical, intimate and considered. I can hear my own voice in them, but equally, reading them back, I am flooded with the surfaces of the artworks I have written about and memories attached to the places where the poems were composed. As anecdotal evidence, I offer this reflection to convey the efficacy of the process of personal embodiment these works of art have undergone in me by writing about them. I believe this process has been able to immunise the poems from the feeling one gets when reading ekphrastic poems that are devoid of a clear speaker or are detached from the work of art that expose the writing as a fleeting engagement.

Recalling how Martin Harrison's poem "Afternoon", discussed in Chapter One draws the reader in by the force of his intimate address, the presence of the speaker (or, the *verfremdungseffekt*) can indeed be the most useful way of encouraging an audience to engage with an artwork that otherwise seems impersonal. Similarly, acknowledging the role of the actor in the process of creating a work of art, allows for a shared lens to be applied to both the artwork and the poetry. It suggests that any artist that I encounter must have also followed a process of trial and error, attempting to summon influences, intentions and desires, in order to create a work that is evidence of this process and that *shows* evidence of this process.

Reflecting on my own process, the experience of writing and editing the poetry for this thesis has involved a constant cycle of definition and redefinition. Testing the limits of ekphrasis has meant often overstepping or missing the mark within a given poem. Often setting out to write about a particular work of art at an exhibition made the poem feel contrived. Early attempts at trying to write about every painting in a given exhibition, one by one, showed me that for a number of reasons an abstract ekphrastic poem can fail. Casting an eye over the many poems that weren't included in this thesis—my own "trophy cabinet for underachievement"—I believe that often it was an inability to sustain the amount of reference required to make sufficient links between the poem and the painting that caused its demise. Other "delightful failures" were the result of a lack of inspiration, or an underwhelming set of "affect responses". Much like the poetry I write which is not ekphrastic, my process involved a lot of exploratory writing: writing without an goal in mind. Journaling is at the centre of this process, in order to write through experiences I am having, the conversations I am involved in, the things that I am reading, the places that I am moving through. All of my poetry is contained somewhere in amongst this mess of non-poetic writing. Three years after reading the quote by Baziotes about lining up his canvases in the morning and finding out what they

tell him about how he is feeling on a given day, I believe it is for this reason that writing abstract ekphrastic poems has been such a rewarding experience. The translation of this visual approach to composition into poetry, has provided me with a way of better articulating my own craft as a poet. I feel as though I have been able to better understand the implications of what “equivalence” means in regard to ekphrasis through this analogy and its influence on my process.

This equivalence allows the abstract ekphrastic encounter to be considered as an exchange. With the poet able to access unique metaphors, themes and styles to incorporate into their text, as well as exposing the work of art to different interpretive guises, here the work of art is considered as a text to be read. Both poem and artwork are interpretively and creatively enhanced by their being viewed through the apparatus of the other.

Whilst there are no requirements for the poet to be kind in their opinion of an artwork, or true to the original intention of the work, what remains incontrovertible in an abstract ekphrasis is the attention that the poet has paid to the artwork in order to develop their poem. Equally, the discrepancy between what one viewer might take from an artwork compared to another in this personal style of ekphrasis is liberatingly non-totalising. What one’s experience writing a commissioned ekphrastic poem for an exhibition is like, what one poet may pick up on in researching an artist, and the things that one poet may observe or comment on in a gallery space, will all be unique. Regardless of the outcome, the process of writing about works of art in the modes that I have discussed in this thesis remains both interpretive and creative—the two boundary conditions that I set for an abstract ekphrasis in my introduction.

In developing my practice as a poet, ekphrastic writing has also opened my eyes to aesthetic, procedural and formal approaches that I would not have discovered from the study of poetry alone. It has also been an essential catalyst for the interrogation and development of my own aesthetic tastes as the genesis for new poetic work. Despite the technical virtues that I attribute to the craft of ekphrasis, ekphrastic writing has always been a process that has called upon my emotional faculties. In my experience, there is no detached contemplation when it comes to a poetic encounter with works of art.

As for what I hope to do with abstract ekphrastic poetics in the future, I have most recently become involved in an exhibition where four artists have been asked to respond to a Virtual Reality (VR) piece called *Deathtolls* by Ali Elslami. Taking up the opportunity to be the writer in residence for this exhibition, I was eager to see what applications this new form of aesthetic experience can have in ekphrastic writing. Whilst I have unsuccessfully attempted to write ekphrastic poems in the second person before, I feel that in this exhibition I had the opportunity to use the metaphor of the immersive VR experience in a gallery-ekphrastic poem as a way for the second-person voice to guide the reader through the exhibition. I have also recently taken on a commission to write an accompanying poetic text for a suite of music by contemporary jazz artist Kiah Gossner. As the music had been written already, the collaborative element of this piece required me to compose my work “after” the original piece, much like an ekphrastic poem. My approach has been akin to the Australian ekphrasis described in Chapter One, though instead of “seeing”, my research has involved “listening” to get my “affect responses”. For me, the unique element of this collaboration has been taking the opportunity to ask the composer about what their inspiration was, instead of “reading” into paratextual details after the fact. I am interested to see how this poetry will fit within the architecture of the musical experience when it is performed; whether it will feel like a

response to an already existing artefact, or whether it will feel more like an extension of the composer's will. Maintaining an involvement with collaborative projects in the arts and constantly looking for inspiration from sources outside of poetry, I believe the knowledge and experience gained in this development of abstract ekphrasis will continue to serve me well going forward.

Certainly, the work of the abstract ekphrastic poet is intimate and involved. It is always tied to a specific location as objects and images are brought into the perpetual present moment of composition through *enargia*. In this way, Barthes statement rings true: “every text is written eternally here and now” (qtd. in Hutcheon 76). In the act of bringing static works of art into the dynamic moment of ekphrastic poetry — whether that be through a *methetisk* trace, the *jouissance* of “searching itself” or *translatio*—I have offered three variations on the approach of the contemporary poet to an existing artwork or collection of artworks. Ultimately, in all cases where an abstract ekphrasis is written, I found that the process and temperament of an individual is accessed in abstract referent works such that it may become embodied in the poet's own personal, equivalent mode of expression.

APPENDIX ONE

Life Burst – Jill Jones

He made this lying down: reaching up
with close and distance in the origin
bird flame, salamander sun
amoeba and embryo, the artist's circle
and begins.

As helpless and astounding life begins
with the cell, its own chaos acres.
Then question, the snake, marks a wall
approaches writing though wombs, tentacle
sperm and flume we come from
this matter whose arrow of love can't be predicted.

Earth bubbles escape into whale call
the fish's tear, where it's all going, mouth helix
to a child's handprint, a tongue (red)
into wormholes, universes, sacs
of blue birth passage.

Perhaps sea felt like this as colours
crawled out and made ochres in the sun.
Within water's eye is release, tasting

the first connection of salt in motion
and one-ness, then sun's line, letting it run
as fast as it can flow.

Trails mix trails evolving a dark script
so many stories in high-red waters, winding
seas whose issue bursts on topographies
lines and loops of existence, the way
numbers form then become invisible.

Tangent suns and filaments merge
a fiery dream you might want to escape
whose threads of existence aren't inevitable
whose parallels don't hold forever.
Can we look at what is over here, or there?
DNA to infinity, dotted through coral stars.

Some crazy life is running with odd grimaces
and grins, hands in the air, a sting in the tail
as bloodskin feels the air with tongues
and questions are overwritten
to disappear, animal within animal.

(Jones n.p)

WORKS CITED

- Adamson, Robert. "Summer at Carcoar" *Weekend Australian Magazine*, 27-28 Mar. 2007, p. 29.
- Aristotle. *Aristotle's Poetics*. Translated and with a commentary by George Whalley, MQUP, 1997. ProQuest Ebook Central
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/adelaide/detail.action?docID=3330809>.
- Armstrong, Richard. "Storylines: Contemporary Art at the Guggenheim." *Guggenheim Museum*, 2015, www.exhibitions.guggenheim.org/storylines. Accessed 14 Sept. 2016.
- Ashbery, John. Introduction. *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*, edited by Donald Allen, Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.
- . *Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror*. Penguin, 1976.
- Auden, W. H. "Musée des Beaux Arts (1938)" *Collected Poems*, edited by Edward Mendelson, Faber and Faber, 1991, p. 179.
- Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 1975.
- Badiou, Alain. "Rimbaud's Method." *Conditions*. Translated by Steven Corcoran, Continuum, 1992.
- . *Théorie du Sujet*. Seuil, 1982.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Wisdom of Art (1979)." *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*. Translated by Richard Howard, Hill and Wang, 1985.
- Bensaïd, Daniel. "Alain Badiou and the Miracle of the Event." *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, edited by Peter Halward, Continuum, 2004, pp. 94-106.
- Benton, Michael. "Anyone for Ekphrasis?" *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1997, pp. 367-76.

- Bolt, Barbara. *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image*. I.B. Tauris & Co, 2004.
- . "Shedding Light for the Matter." *Hypatia*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2000, pp. 202-216.
- Bolton, Ken. "Dark Heart." *Cordite 53:1 THE END*, www.cordite.org.au/poetry/theend/dark-heart/. Accessed 7 Apr. 2017.
- . *Sly Mongoose*. Puncher & Wattman, 2011.
- Brown, Pam. "Pam Brown Reviews "Sly Mongoose" by Ken Bolton." *Galatea Resurrects*, www.galatearesurrection17.blogspot.com.au/2011/12/sly-mongoose-by-ken-bolton.html. Accessed 11 Sept. 2017.
- Burke, Edmund. *The Sublime and Beautiful*, 1757. *eBooks@Adelaide*, <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/b/burke/edmund/sublime/part2.html#part2.8>
- Butler, Christopher. *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2002.
- Carroll, Noël. "Art Interpretation: The 2010 Richard Wollheim Memorial Lecture." *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2011, pp. 117-35.
- . "Interpretation and Intention: The Debate Between Hypothetical and Actual Intentionalism." *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 31, 2000, pp. 75-79.
- Carter, Paul. *The Lie of the Land*. Faber and Faber, 1996.
- Castro, Brian. "Continental Drift: Writing, Experience and Geography [Address to the Sydney Institute, 9 August 1994]." *The Sydney Papers*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1994, pp. 115-24.
- Cattapan, Jon. *Body Chart*. 1995, Newcastle Regional Art Gallery.
- Cavafy, Constantine. *The Complete Poems of Cavafy*. Translated by Rae Dalven. Hogarth, 1961.

- Corbett, Rachel. "A New Cy Twombly Biography Mentioning His 'Assistant' Has Dismayed the Late Artist's Supporters." *Artnet NEWS*. 17 Oct. 2018. www.news.artnet.com/art-world/cy-twombly-foundation-biography-rivkin-1334732. Accessed 20 Dec. 2018.
- Corbett, William. "A Few Words on James Schuyler." *Jacket2 Special Issue: A Schuyler of Urgent Concern*. Jacket2, 12 June, 2012, www.jacket2.org/article/few-words-james-schuyler. Accessed 12 Sept. 2017.
- Corn, Alfred. "Notes on Ekphrasis." *Poets.org*, 2008, www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/notes-ekphrasis. Accessed 12 Sept. 2016.
- Cossington Smith, Grace. *Trees*. c.1927, Newcastle Regional Art Gallery.
- Cullinan, Nicholas. "Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly's Roman Holiday." *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 150, 2008, pp. 460-70.
- Davidson, Michael. "Ekphrasis and the Postmodern Painter Poem." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1983, pp. 69-79.
- Denham, Robert D. *Poets on Paintings: A Bibliography*. McFarland, 2010.
- Dick, David. "David Dick Reviews Ken Bolton and B. R. Dionysius." *Cordite*, 2014, www.cordite.org.au/reviews/dick-bolton-dionysius/. Accessed 11 Sept. 2017.
- Doty, Mark. *Still Life with Oysters and Lemon: On Objects and Intimacy*. Beacon Press, 2001.
- Dwyer, Mikala. *A Shape of Thought*. 2017, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. www.mikaladwyer.com/a-shape-of-thought-2017. Image Accessed 10 Feb. 2019.
- Evans, Shaula. "Let's Write A Renga!" *Shaula Evans*, www.shaulaevans.com/lets-write-a-renga-poem/. Accessed 7 June 2018.
- Fagan, Kate. "Circa 1927: Realising Belief" *Weekend Australian Magazine*, 27-28 Mar. 2007, p. 31.
- Farrell, Michael. *Cocky's Joy*. Giramondo Publishing, 2015.

---. *Ode Ode*. Salt, 2002.

---. *Open Sesame*. Giramondo Publishing, 2012.

Fitch, Toby. "Themparks." *Journal of Poetics Research*, 5 June 2017,

www.poeticsresearch.com/article/toby-fitch-themparks/. Accessed 10 Nov. 2017.

Forbes, John. *Damaged Glamour*. Brandl & Schlesinger, 1998.

Ford, Mark, editor. *The New York Poets; An Anthology*. Carcanet, 2004.

Freiman, Marcelle. "Ekphrasis, Poetry and Emplacement: 'Writing with Visual Art'."

Encounters: Refereed Conference Papers of the 17th Annual AAWP Conference.

TEXT Journal, 2012.

Freud, Lucien. *And the Bridegroom*. 1993, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

Gerber, Natalie. "Structural Surprise in the Triadic-Line Poems." *William Carlos Williams*

Review, vol. 27, no. 2, 2007, pp. 179-86.

Gere, Charlie, and Doris Rohr. "Drawing on Text." *Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice*,

vol.3, no.1, 2018, pp. 3-12.

Ginsberg, Allen. "Poetic Breath, and Pound's Usura." *Allen Verbatim*. McGraw Hill, 1975.

pp. 161-77.

Gordon, Adam Lindsay. "Doubtful Dreams." *The Poetical Works of Adam Lindsay Gordon*,

Ward & Lock, 1913.

Greene, Roland, et al. "Haikai." *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th ed.,

Princeton UP, 2012.

Greub, Thierry. "Inverted Archaeology." *The Essential Cy Twombly*, edited by Nicola Del

Roscio, Thames & Hudson, 2014.

Grossman, Allen. *True-Love: Essays on Poetry and Valuing*. Chicago UP, 2009.

Harari, Fiona. "Pen Portraits." *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 27-28 Mar. 2007, pp. 28-

31.

- Harrison, Martin. "Afternoon" *Poets Paint Words*. 2007, Newcastle Regional Art Gallery.
- Haseman, Bradley C. "Rupture and Recognition: Identifying the Performative Research Paradigm." *Practice As Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, edited by Estelle Barrett & Barbara Bolt, I.B. Tauris, 2007, pp. 147-57.
- Heffernan, James. "Ekphrasis and Representation." *New Literary History*, vol. 22, Spring, 1991, pp. 297-316.
- Hetherington, Paul & Cassandra Atherton. "'Unconscionable Mystification'?: Rooms, Spaces and the Prose Poem." *New Writing*, vol. 12, no.3, 2015, pp. 265-281.
- Hetherington, Paul. *Gallery of Antique Art*. Recent Work Press, 2016.
- Holmes, Richard. *Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Traveller*. Viking Press, 1985.
- . *Shelley: The Pursuit*. Quartet Books, 1974.
- Horace. *Epistles, Book II; and, Epistle to the Pisones (Ars Poetica)*. Edited by Niall Rudd, Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. Routledge, 1988.
- Ireland, Ivy. "What We Do For Survival" *Poets Paint Words II Education Resource*, 2009
http://nag.org.au/getattachment/Exhibitions/Current/Archives/2009/Poets-Paint-Words-II/Poets_Paint_Words_II_Ed_resource.pdf.aspx.
- Jacobus, Mary. *Cy Twombly: Poetry in Paint*. Princeton UP, 2016.
- Jagodzinski, Jan. "The Site/Sight/Cite of Jacques Lacan, or Forget Slavoj Žižek? Implications for Art and its Education." *Visual Arts Research*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2010, pp. 15-37.
- Johnston, Adrian. "Jacques Lacan." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2018, edited by Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/lacan/>. Accessed 18 Dec. 2018.
- Jones, Jill. Personal Interview. 15 May 2016.
- . "This Material Spirit" *Poets Paint Words*. 2007, Newcastle Regional Art Gallery.

- Kaplan, Genevieve. "Ekphrasis for Writers: John Ashbery's 'Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror'." *TEXT Journal*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2009.
- Keats, John. "Ode on a Grecian Urn." *Romanticism an Anthology*, edited by Duncan Wu, 4th ed., John Wiley & Sons, 2012.
- Kennedy, Randy. "American Artist Who Scribbled a Unique Path." *New York Times*, 5 July 2011, p. A1 www.nytimes.com/2011/07/06/arts/cy-twombly-american-artist-is-dead-at-83.html?pagewanted=all&r=5&. Accessed 6 July 2011.
- Kennedy, Robert J. *DiVerse Poets*. www.diversepoets.blogspot.com.au. DiVerse Poets, 2014. Accessed 10 Sept. 2016.
- Kerr, Tristan and Thomas McCammon. *Paradise*. 2017, Adelaide Centre for Creative Photography. Series of six photographs, acrylic on photographic paper.
- Krieger, Murray. "Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry: Or Laokoön Revisited." *The Poet as Critic*, edited by Frederick MacDowell Evanston, Northwestern UP, 1967.
- Lett, Belem. *I got home from work and sat on the toilet scrolling then remembered i needed to paint a self portrait for the Archibald so I took a selfie and continued to scroll*. 2017, S H Ervin Gallery, Sydney.
- Levinson, Jerrold. "Autographic and Allographic Art Revisited." *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, vol. 38, no. 4, 1980, pp. 367-83.
- Mallarmé, Stéphane. *Un Coup De Dés Jamais N'abolira Le Hasard: Poème (1914 Version)*. <https://math.dartmouth.edu/~doyle/docs/coup/scan/coup.pdf>. Accessed 18 Dec. 2018
- McMillan, Andrew. *Physical*. Cape Poetry, 2014.
- Miller, Andrew D. *Poetry, Photography, Ekphrasis: Lyrical Representations of Photographs from the 19th Century to the Present*. Liverpool UP, 2015.
- Minter, Peter. "Installation view of PPW 1". 2007. pers. comm, 2016.

- Mitchell, W J T. "Ekphrasis and the Other." *Picture Theory*, Chicago UP, 1994.
- Moramarco, Fred. "John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara: The Painterly Poets." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1976, pp. 436-62.
- Neumann, Birgit. "Postcolonial Ekphrasis and Counter-Visions in Derek Walcott's 'Tiepolo's Hound'—Contacts, Contests and Translations." *Zeitschrift Für Anglistik Und Amerikanistik*, vol. 64, no. 4. 2016, pp. 447-65
- O'Hara, Frank. *Selected Poems*. Edited by Mark Ford, Borzoi Poetry, Knopf, 2008.
- Olsen, John. *Life Burst*. 1964, Newcastle Regional Art Gallery.
- Olson, Charles. "Cy Twombly." *Writings on Cy Twombly*, edited by Nicola Del Roscio, Schirmer/Mosel, 2002.
- Paloma, Melody. *In Some Ways Dingo*. Rabbit Poets Series, no. 9, 2017.
- Pardlo, Gregory. "Node 5: Ekphrasis and the Question of Perfect Equilibrium." *Callaloo*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2012, pp. 584-603.
- Paterson, Eddie. *redactor*. Whitmore Press, 2017.
- Paz, Octavio. *Selected Poems*. Edited by Eliot Weinberger, New Directions, 1984.
- Perloff, Marjorie. *Frank O'Hara: Poet Amongst Painters*. George Braziller, 1977.
- Pope, Alexander. "Preface to the Iliad." *Selected Prose of Alexander Pope*, edited by Paul Hammond, Cambridge UP, 1987, pp. 92.
- Potter, Lucy. "Ekphrastic Catharsis: Marlowe's Mural of Troy's Fall in *The Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage*." *Word and Image*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2018, pp. 310-21.
- Quilty, Ben. "Self Portrait, the Executioner." *Art Gallery NSW Collection*. 2015, <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/339.2016/>. Accessed 24 Oct. 2017.
- Rauschenberg, Robert. *Cy + Relics*. 1952. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation/VAGA, New York. *Robert Rauschenberg Foundation*,

www.rauschenbergfoundation.org/art/artwork/cy-relics-rome. Accessed 10 Dec.

2018.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, vol.3, Chicago UP, 1988.

Rilke, Raine Marie. *Ahead of All Parting: The Selected Poetry and Prose of Rilke*. Translated by Stephen Mitchell, Random House, 1995.

---. *The Poetry of Rilke*. Translated and edited by Edward Snow, North Point Press, 2009.

Rivkin, Joshua. *Chalk: The Art and Erasure of Cy Twombly*. Melville House, 2018.

Roberts, Tom. *Going Home*. 1889, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Rosenberg, Harold. *The Tradition of the New*. Thames and Hudson, 1962.

Schuster, Aaron. *The Trouble With Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis*. MIT Press, 2016.

Scott, Grant F. "Review Essay: Ekphrasis." *European Romantic Review*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1992, pp. 215-224.

Seferis, George. "Three Secret Poems." *Greek Poetry Translations: Views, Texts, Reviews*.

Edited by M. Byron Raizis, Efstathiadis, 1983. pp. 164-165. Copy Marked by Cy Twombly. Reproduced courtesy of Allesandro Twombly. Photo British School of Roma. Qtd. in Jacobus, p. 7.

Shapcott, Thomas. "Letter to the Editor: The Prose Poem in Australia – and Elsewhere."

TEXT Journal, vol. 6, no. 2, 2002, www.textjournal.com.au/oct02/letters.htm.

Accessed 12 Sept. 2017.

Sheehan, Sean. *Žižek: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Continuum, 2012.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *Poems of Shelley*. Edited Henry Newbolt, Nelson and Sons, 1930.

Shklovsky, Viktor. "Art as Technique." *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, translated and edited by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, Nebraska UP, 1965.

- Sidney, Phillip. *An Apology for Poetry*. Edited by Geoffrey Shephard, Nelson and Sons, 1965.
- Silverberg, Mark. "The Poetics of Process." *The New York School Poets and the Neo-Avant-Garde: Between Radical Art and Radical Chic*, Routledge, 2016, pp. 91-120.
- Spiegleman, Willard. *How Poets See the World: The Art of Description in Contemporary Poetry*. Oxford UP, 2005.
- Steele, Peter. *Plenty*. MacMillan, 2006.
- . *The Whispering Gallery: Art into Poetry*. MacMillan, 2003.
- Streeton, Arthur. *Above us the great grave sky*. 1890, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.
- Sullivan, Karen. "The Languages of Art: How Representational and Abstract Painters Conceptualize Their Work In Terms Of Language." *Poetics Today*, vol. 30. no. 3, 2009, pp. 517-560.
- Swensen, Cole. "To Writewithize & How Ekphrasis Makes Art." *Noise That Stays Noise: Essays*, Michigan UP, 2011, pp. 61-81.
- Symes, Dominic. *Nine Ways of Looking at a Painting*. 2014. U of Adelaide, Honours Dissertation.
- . "Review Short: Eddie Paterson's *redactor*." *Cordite*, Jan. 29, 2018.
www.cordite.org.au/reviews/symes-paterson/. Accessed 17 Dec. 2018.
- Taylor, John. "Review: 'To Repel Ghosts' by Kevin Young." *Poetry*, vol. 180, no. 2, 2002, pp. 96-97.
- Twombly, Cy. *Apollo and the Artist*. 1975, Tate Modern Gallery, London. <https://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/lingering-threshold-between-word-and-image>. Accessed 10 Feb. 2018.
- . *Fifty Days at Iliam, Part I: "Shield of Achilles"*. 1978. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

- . *Fifty Days at Iliam, Part V: "The Fire That Consumes All before It"*. 1978. Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- . *Fifty Days at Iliam, Part VI: "The House of Priam"*. 1978. Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- . *Goethe in Italy*. 1978. Kunsthaus Zurich.
- . *School of Fontainebleau*. 1960. Collection Marx, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.
- . *Thyrsis, Part II*. 1977. Collection Marx, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.
- . *Untitled (Say Goodbye Catullus, to the Shores of Asia Minor)*. 1994. The Menil Collection, Houston.
- . *Vengeance of Achilles*. 1962. Kunsthaus Zurich.
- Varnedoe, Kirk. "Inscriptions in Arcadia." *The Essential Cy Twombly*, edited by Nicola Del Roscio, Thames & Hudson, 2014.
- . *Pictures of Nothing: Abstract Art After Jackson Pollock*. Princeton UP, 2006.
- . "Your Kid Could Not Do This, and Other Reflections on Cy Twombly." *MoMA*, no. 18, 1994, pp. 18-23.
- Walcott, Derek. *Tiepolo's Hound*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001.
- Webb, Ruth. "Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre." *Word and Image*, vol. 15, 1999, pp. 7-18.
- Westrup, Jack, et. al. "Aria." *Grove Music Online*. 1 Jan. 2001, Oxford UP, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043315>. Accessed 18 Dec. 2018
- Williamson, Alan. *Introspection and Contemporary Poetry*. Harvard UP, 1984.
- Whiteley, Brett. *Summer at Carcoar*. 1977, Newcastle Regional Art Gallery.
- Wollheim, Richard. "Art, Interpretation, and Perception." *The Mind and its Depths*, Harvard UP, 1993.
- . *Painting As An Art*. Princeton UP, 1987.

Wright, Tim. *The Night's Live Changes*. Rabbit Poets Series, no. 2, 2014.

Young, Kevin. *To Repel Ghosts*. Zoland Books, 2001.

Zangwill, Nick. *Aesthetic Creation*. Clarendon, 2007.

Žižek, Slavoj. "'Courtly Love; or Woman as Thing' from 'The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality' (1994)." *The Žižek Reader*, edited by Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright, Blackwell, 1999.

---. *Organs without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences*. Taylor and Francis, 2003. *ProQuest Ebook Central*,
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/adelaide/detail.action?docID=4523470>.

WORKS CONSULTED

- Acton, Mary. *Learning to Look at Modern Art*. Routledge, 2004.
- Adamson, Robert. *Selected Poems 1970-1989*. U of Queensland P, 1990.
- Aitken, Adam. *Romeo and Juliet in Subtitles*. Brandl & Schlesinger, 2000.
- Allen, Donald, editor. *The New American Poetry*. Random House, 1960.
- Altieri, Charles. "John Ashbery and the Challenge of Postmodernism in the Visual Arts."
Critical Inquiry, vol. 14, No. 4, 1988, pp. 805-30.
- . *Painterly Abstraction in Modernist American Poetry: The Contemporaneity of
Modernism*. Cambridge UP, 1989.
- . "Contemporary Poetry as Philosophy: Subjective Agency in John Ashbery and C. K.
Williams." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 33, no. 2 Special Issue: American Poetry
of the 1980's, 1992, pp. 214-42.
- Apollinaire, Guillaume. *Selected Poems*. Translated with an Introduction by Oliver Bernard,
Penguin Books, 1965.
- Ashbery, John. *As We Know*. Viking Press, 1979.
- . *Collected Poems 1956-1987*. Edited by Mark Ford, The Library of America, 2008.
- . *Hotel Lautreamont*. Carcanet, 1992.
- . *The Tennis Court Oath*. Wesleyan UP, 1962.
- . *Rivers and Mountains*. Ecco Press, 1977.
- . *Where Shall I Wander: New Poems*. Ecco Press, 2005.
- Badiou, Alain. *The Century*. Translated, with Commentary and Notes, by Alberto Toscano,
Polity, 2008.
- Barrett, Estelle & Barbara Bolt, editors. *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a 'New Materialism'
through the Arts*, I.B. Tauris, 2013.

- Barthes, Roland. *Image / Music / Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath, Hill and Wang, 1977.
- . *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. Translated by Richard Howard, Penguin, 1990.
- Beardsley, Monroe. *Aesthetics*. Brace and World, 1958.
- Bendon, Helen. "A Place for Ambiguity: Articulating Practice as Research." *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2005, pp. 157–165.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Fontana, 1977.
- Bensaïd, Daniel. "Alain Badiou and the Miracle of the Event." *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, edited by Peter Halward, Continuum, 2004. pp. 94–106.
- Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. Penguin Books, 1972.
- Bilman, Emily. *Modern Ekphrasis Emily Bilman*. Peter Lang, 2013.
- Bird, John. "Indeterminacy and (Dis)Order in the Work of Cy Twombly." *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2007, pp. 486–504.
- Bloom, Janet & Robert Losada. "Craft Interview with John Ashbery." *New York Quarterly*, vol. 9, Winter, 1972, pp. 24–25.
- Bolt, Barbara. "After Motherwell, after Manet, and after Goya: The Performative power of Imaging and the Intensely Present." *TEXT Journal*, Special Issue 33: Art as Parodic Practice, 2015, pp. 1–13.
- . "Rhythm and the Performative Power of the index: Lessons from Kathleen Petyarre's Paintings." *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2006, pp. 57–64.
- Bolton, Ken. *Selected Poems 1975–1990*. Penguin, 1992.
- . *Untimely Meditations & Other Poems*. Wakefield Press, 1997.
- . *Homage to John Forbes*. Brandl & Schlesinger, 2002.
- . Interview with Peter Minter: 12 October 2004 to 29 April 2005. *Jacket*, vol. 27, <http://jacketmagazine.com/27/index.shtml>. Accessed 29 June 2016.

---. *A Whistled Bit of Bop*. Vagabond Press, 2006.

Brien, Donna Lee, and Eades, Quinn, editors. *Offshoot: Contemporary Life Writing Methodologies and Practice*. UWA Publishing, 2018.

Brophy, Kevin. *Walking: New & Selected Poems*. John Leonard Press, 2013.

Brown, Carl RV. "Contemporary Poetry About Painting." *The English Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1992, pp. 41-45.

Catullus, Gaius Valerius. *Catullus*. Edited, with Introduction, Translation and Notes by G.P. Goold, Duckworth, 1983.

Cheeke, Stephen. *Writing for Art: The Aesthetics of Ekphrasis*. Manchester UP, 2008.

Cohen, Leonard. *The Book of Longing*. Penguin Books, 2006.

Creeley, Robert. *The Collected Poems of Robert Creeley, 1945-1975*. U of California P, 1982.

Crimp, Douglas. *On the Museum's Ruins*. MIT Press, 1993.

Crowther, Paul & Isabel Wünsche, editors. *Meanings of Abstract Art: Between Nature and Theory*. Routledge, 2012.

Danchev, Alex, editor. *100 Artists' Manifestos*. Penguin, 2011.

Dante, Alighieri. *Dante's Inferno: the Indiana Critical Edition*. Translated and Edited by Mark Musa, Indiana UP, 1995.

Davenport, Guy, editor. *Archilochus, Sappho, Alkman: Three Lyric Poets of the Late Greek Bronze Age*. Translated, with an Introduction by Guy Davenport. U of California P, 1980.

Demetriou, Cynthia. "Lessons in Ekphrasis: Writing and Analysis." *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2006, pp. 211-16.

Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass, U of Chicago P, 1966, pp. 278-95.

- Duggan, Laurie. *New and Selected Poems, 1971-1993*. U of Queensland P, 1996.
- During, Simon, editor. *Foucault and Literature: Towards a Genealogy of Writing*. Routledge, 1992.
- Edmond, Martin. *Dark Night: Walking with McCahon*. Auckland UP, 2011.
- Eliot, T. S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent (1919)." *Perspecta*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1982, pp. 36-42.
- Enzensberger, Hans Magnus. *Selected Poems*. Translated by Michael Hamburger, Bloodaxe Books, 1994.
- Ferguson, Russell. *In Memory of My Feelings: Frank O'Hara and American Art*. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1999.
- Ferney, Liam. *Popular Mechanics*. Interactive Press, 2004.
- Flanagan, Richard. "'Does Writing Matter' the Inaugural Boisbouvier Lecture, Melbourne Writers Festival, 2016." *The Monthly*, October 2016, www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2016/october/1475244000/richard-flanagan/does-writing-matter. Accessed 9 Mar. 2017.
- Forbes, John. *Collected Poems*. 2nd ed., Brandl & Schlesinger, 2002.
- Ford, Mark and Trevor Winkfield, editors. *The New York Poets II; An Anthology*. Carcanet, 2006.
- Freiman, Marcelle. "Ekphrasis as Enactment: Towards a Poetics of Contemporary Diaspora Practice." *Axon: Creative Explorations*, vol. 2, no. 7, 2017.
- Gold, Alexandra J. "Frank O'Hara's Dictionary of Art: A Collaborative Ekphrasis." *Word & Image*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2018, pp. 126-36.
- Golding, John. *Paths to the Absolute: Mondrian, Malevich, Kandinsky, Pollock, Newman, Rothko, and Still*. Princeton UP, 2000.

- Gombrich, E. H. *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. Princeton UP, 2000.
- Green, Leila Rosalind. "Creative Writing as Practice-Led Research." *Australian Journal of Communication*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2011, pp. 175-88.
- Greenberg, Clement. *The Collected Essays and Criticism*. Edited by John Brian, U of Chicago P, 1986.
- Harrison, Martin. *Wild Bees: New and Selected Poems*. U of Western Australia P, 2008.
- Hayes, Terrence. *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin*. Penguin Books, 2018.
- . *How to be Drawn*. Penguin Books, 2015.
- Hecht, Anthony. *On the Laws of the Poetic Art*. Princeton UP, 1995.
- Heffernan, James. *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*. U of Chicago P, 1993.
- . "Painting against Poetry: Reynolds's Discourses and the Discourse of Turner's Art." *Word & Image*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1991, pp. 275-99.
- . "Self-Representation in Byron and Turner." *Poetics Today*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1989, pp. 207-41.
- . "Speaking for Pictures: The Rhetoric of Art Criticism." *Word & Image*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1999, pp. 19-33.
- Holland-Batt, Sarah. "Ekphrasis, Photography, and Ethical Strategies of Witness: Poetic Responses to Emmett Till." *New Writing*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2018, pp. 466-77.
- Holub, Miroslav. *Selected Poems*. Translated by Ian Milner and George Theiner, Penguin, 1967.
- Hulatt, Owen, editor. *Aesthetic and Artistic Autonomy*. Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Hunt, John Dixon et. al. *Art, Word and Image: Two Thousand Years of Visual/Textual Interaction*, edited by David Lomas & Michael Corris, Reaktion, 2010.

- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. Taylor and Francis, 2012.
- Jackson, Barry. "Semiotics, Visual Art and Language." *American Journal of Semiotics*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1992, pp. 141-50.
- Jones, Frederic J. *The Modern Italian Lyric*. U of Wales P, 1986.
- Jones, Jill. *Brink*. Five Islands Press, 2017.
- . *Viva the Real*. U of Queensland P, 2018.
- Katz, Daniel. "James Schuyler's Epistolary Poetry: Things, Postcards, Ekphrasis." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2010, pp. 143–61.
- Keller, Lynn. "Poems Living with Paintings: Cole Swensen's Ekphrastic Try." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2005, pp. 176-212.
- Kennedy, David. *The Ekphrastic Encounter in Contemporary British Poetry and Elsewhere*. Ashgate, 2012.
- Kinsella, John. *Poems: 1980-1994*. Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1997.
- Kirkup, James, translator. *Modern Japanese Poetry*. Edited & with an Introduction by A. R. Davis, UQP, 1978.
- Koch, Kenneth. *Selected Poems, 1950-1982*. Vintage Books, 1985.
- Krieger, Murray. *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1992.
- Leonard, John, editor. *The Puncher & Wattmann Anthology of Australian Poetry*. Puncher and Wattmann, 2009.
- Liardet, Tim. "Ekphrasis and Ekphrasis." *New Welsh Review*, no. 72, 2006, pp. 31-37.
- Livingston, Paisley. *Art and Intention: A Philosophical Study*. Oxford UP, 2005.
- Lowe, Cameron. "Text and Paratext: Ern Malley and the Function of the Author." *Cordite*, Dec. 1, 2010, www.cordite.org.au/scholarly/text-and-paratext/. Accessed 12 Jan. 2017.
- Lowell, Robert. *The Dolphin*. Faber and Faber, 1973.

- Lunberry, Clark D. "That's the Beauty of It, Or, Why John Ashbery is Not a Painter." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2011, pp. 172-84.
- Macarthur, Marit. "The Skinny on Schuyler's Line." *Jacket 2. Special Issue: A Schuyler of Urgent Concern*. Jacket2, June 12, 2012, www.jacket2.org/article/skinny-schuylers-line. Accessed 12 Sept. 2017.
- Mallarmé, Stéphane. *Poems*. Translated by Roger Fry, Chatto & Windus, 1936.
- Malley, Ern. *Collected Poems*. Angus & Robertson, 1993.
- Maritain, Jacques. *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*. Pathean Books, 1953.
- Mazzaro, Jerome. *Postmodern American Poetry*. U of Illinois P, 1980.
- McCahon, Colin. *Van Gogh. Poems by John Caselberg*. 1957. Christchurch Art Gallery. Christchurch Art Gallery, www.christchurchgallery.org.nz/collection/2005-0761-5. Accessed 6 June 2016.
- McDowell, Frederick P. W., editor. *The Poet as Critic: Essays*. Northwestern UP, 1967.
- McMillan, Andrew. *Playtime*. Cape Poetry, 2018.
- Minogue, Sally & Andrew Palmer. "'Horrors Here Smile': The Poem, the Photograph and the Punctum." *Word & Image*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2013, pp. 203-211.
- Minter, Peter. *Blue Grass*. Salt, 2006.
- . *Empty Texas*. Paper Bark Press, 1999.
- Moorman, Honor. "Backing into Ekphrasis: Reading and Writing Poetry About Visual Art." *The English Journal*, vol. 96, no. 1, 2006, pp. 46-53.
- Mullen, Harryette. *Sleeping with the Dictionary*. U of California P, 2002.
- Myles, Eileen. *I Must Be Living Twice: New and Selected Poems 1975-2014*. Serpent's Tail, 2018.
- Neruda, Pablo. *100 Love Sonnets / Cien Sonetos De Amor*. Translated by Stephen Tapscott, U of Texas P, 1986.

- O'Hara, Frank. *Meditations in an Emergency*. Grove Press, 1967.
- . *Art Chronicles, 1954-1966*. George Braziller, 1975.
- Olsen, John. *My Salute to Five Bells*. National Library of Australia, 2015.
- Olson, Charles. "Cy Twombly." *Writings on Cy Twombly*. Edited by Nicola Del Roscio, Schirmer/Mosel, 2002.
- Padgett, Ron. *Big Something*. Figures, 1990.
- Paz, Octavio. *Selected Poems*. Edited by Eliot Weinberger, New Directions, 1984.
- Paz, Octavio and John Harvey. "The Cy Twombly Gallery at the Menil Collection: A Conversation." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 28, 1995, pp. 180–183.
- Peponi, Anastasia-Erasmia. *Frontiers of Pleasure: Models of Aesthetic Response in Archaic and Classical Greek Thought*. Oxford UP, 2012.
- Perloff, Marjorie. *The Poetic Art of Robert Lowell*. Cornell UP, 1973.
- . *The Poetics of Indeterminacy*. Princeton UP, 1981.
- . "Beyond "Adagia": Eccentric Design in Stevens's Poetry." *Wallace Stevens Journal*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2011, pp. 16-32.
- Petrarca, Francesco. *The Essential Petrarch*. Edited and Translated, with an Introduction, by Peter Hainsworth, Hackett Pub. Co., 2010.
- Pleyner, Marcelin. "Design in Letters, Numbers and Words or Painting by Ear." *Writings on Cy Twombly*, edited by Nicola Del Roscio, 1976, pp. 74-87.
- Pound, Ezra. *ABC of Reading*. Yale UP, 1934.
- . *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*. 4th ed., Faber and Faber, 1987.
- Rankine, Claudia & Juliana Spahr, editors. *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language*, Wesleyan UP, 2002.
- Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke*. Translated by Jade Bannard Greene & M. D. Herter Norton, The Norton Library, 1972.

- Rimbaud, Arthur. *A Season in Hell*. Translated by Louise Varèse, with a preface by Patti Smith, New Directions, 2011.
- . *Illuminations*. Translated with a Preface by John Ashbery, W.W. Norton, 2011.
- Rothenberg, Jerome, editor. *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia & Oceania*. Doubleday, 1968.
- Ryan, Gig. *New and Selected Poems*. Giramondo Publishing, 2011.
- Savige, Jaya. *Latecomers*. U of Queensland P, 2005.
- . *Surface to Air*. U of Queensland P, 2011.
- Schuyler, James. *The Morning of the Poem*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980.
- . *The Letters of James Schuyler to Frank O'Hara*. Edited by William Corbett, Turtle Point, 2006.
- . *Other Flowers: Uncollected Poems*. Edited by James Meetze and Simon Pettet, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.
- Schwenger, Peter. "Enigmatic Epistolarity: Twombly's Letter of Resignation." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2017, pp. 73–89.
- Shank, Nathan. "Understated Meaning in Frank O'Hara." *The Explicator*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2011, pp. 76-80.
- Shklovsky, Viktor. *A Hunt for Optimism*. Translated by Shushan Avagyan, Dalkey Archive Press, 2012.
- Skains, R. Lyle. "Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology." *Media Practice and Education*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2018, pp. 82-97.
- Spiegelman, Willard. *How Poets See the World: The Art of Description in Contemporary Poetry*. Oxford UP, 2005.

- Stamelman, Richard. "Critical Reflections: Poetry and Art Criticism in Ashbery's "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror"." *New Literary History*, vol. 15, no. 3, Image/Imagio/Imagination, Spring, 1984, pp. 607-30.
- Steiner, George. *Real Presences: Is There Anything in What We Say?* Faber and Faber, 1989.
- Stevens, Wallace. *The Necessary Angel; Essays on Reality and the Imagination*. Faber and Faber, 1951.
- . *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*. Edited by John N. Serio & Chris Beyers, Corrected ed., Vintage Books, 2015.
- Sullivan, Hannah. *Three Poems*. Faber and Faber, 2018.
- Susik, Abigail. "Cy Twombly: Writing after Writing." *re.bus*, Issue 4, Autumn/Winter, 2009, pp. 1-26.
- Swensen, Cole. *Try*. U of Iowa P, 1999.
- Sylvester, David. *Interviews with American Artists*. Chatto & Windus, 2001.
- Tate, James. *Selected Poems*. Carcanet, 1997.
- Terras, Victor. *Vladimir Mayakovsky*. Twayne, 1983.
- Towle, Tony. *North*. Columbia UP, 1970.
- Tranströmer, Tomas. *Selected Poems*. Edited by Robert Hass, Ecco Press, 1987.
- Tranter, John. *Selected Poems*. Hale & Iremonger, 1982.
- Tuchman, Maurice, editor. *New York School: The First Generation: Paintings of the 1940s and 1950s*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971.
- Varnedoe, Kirk. "Why Modern Art Matters Now." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 147, no. 2, 2003, pp. 128-33.
- Varnedoe, Kirk, and Richard Serra. "Cy Twombly: An Artist's Artist." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 28, Autumn, 1995, pp. 163-79.
- Vuong, Ocean. *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*. Cape Poetry, 2017.

- Wallis, Brian. *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*. D.R. Godine, 1984.
- Waters, William. *Poetry's Touch: On Lyric Address*. Cornell UP, 2003.
- Williams, Raymond. *Keywords; a Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Oxford UP, 1983.
- Wilson, Timothy H. "Foucault, Genealogy, History." *Philosophy Today*, vol. 39, no. 2, Summer, 1995, pp. 157-70.
- Wright, Patrick. "Ekphrasis in Response to the Non-Figurative Image." *Axon: Creative Explorations*, vol. 2, no. 7, 2017.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *Event: Philosophy in Transit*. Penguin, 2014.